N. GOGOL

MIRGOROD

NIKOLAI GOGOL

MIRGOROD

BEING A CONTINUATION OF EVENINGS
IN A VILLAGE NEAR DIKANKA

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW

Translated from the Russian

Illustrated by A. Kanevsky
Designed by E. Krivinskaya

Mirgorod is a small town situated on the River Khorol. It has a rope-yard, a brick-yard, four water- and 45 windmills.

From "Geography" by Zyablovsky

Although rolls are made of rye in Mirgorod they are quite tasty.

From "A Traveller's Diary"

CONTENTS

PART ONE

OLD-TIME LANDOWNERS 13

TARAS BULBA 41

PART TWO

VIY 187

THE TALE OF HOW IVAN IVANOVICH QUARRELLED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVICH 237

PART ONE

I am very fond of the modest manner of life of those solitary owners of remote villages, who in the Ukraine are commonly called "old-timers," who are like tumble-down picturesque little houses, delightful in their colourful simplicity and complete unlikeness to the new smooth houses whose walls have not yet been discoloured by the rain, whose roofs are not yet covered with green lichen, and whose porches do not display their red bricks through the peeling stucco. I like sometimes to enter for a moment into that extraordinarily secluded life in which not one desire flits beyond the palisade surrounding the little courtyard, beyond the hurdle of the orchard filled with plum- and apple-trees, beyond the village huts surrounding it, lying all aslant under the shade of willows, elders and pear-trees. The life of their modest owners is so quiet, so quiet that for a moment one is lost in forgetfulness and imagines that those passions, desires and restless promptings of the evil

spirit that trouble the world have no real existence, and that you have only beheld them in some lurid, dazzling dream. I can see now the low-pitched little house with the gallery of little blackened wooden posts running right round it, so that in hail or storm they could close the shutters without being wetted by the rain. Behind it a fragrant bird-cherry, rows of dwarf fruittrees, drowned in a sea of red cherries and amethyst plums, covered with lead-coloured bloom; a spreading maple in the shade of which a rug is laid to rest on; before the house a spacious court-yard of short fresh grass with a little pathway trodden from the storehouse to the kitchen and from the kitchen to the master's apartments; a long-necked goose drinking water with young goslings soft as down around her; a palisade hung with strings of dried pears and apples, and rugs put out to air; a cartful of melons standing by the store-house; an unharnessed ox lying lazily beside it—they all have an inexpressible charm for me, perhaps because I no longer see them and because everything from which we are parted is dear to us.

Be that as it may, at the very moment when my chaise was driving up to the steps of that little house, my soul passed into a wonderfully sweet and serene mood; the horses galloped merrily up to the steps; the coachman very tranquilly clambered down from the box and filled his pipe as though he had reached home; even the barking set up by phlegmatic Rovers, Pontos and Neros was pleasant to my ears. But above all else I liked the owners of these modest little nooks—the little old men and women who came out solicitously to meet me. I can see their faces sometimes even now among fashionable dress coats in the noise and crowd, and then I sink into a half-dreaming state, and the past rises up before me. Their faces always betray such kindness, such hospitality and sincerity that unconsciously one renounces, for a brief spell at least, all ambitious dreams, and imperceptibly passes with all one's heart into this humble bucolic life.

To this day I cannot forget two old people of a past age, now, alas! no more. To this day I am full of regret, and it sends a strange pang to my heart when I imagine myself going some time again to their old, now deserted, dwelling, and seeing the heap of ruined huts, the pond choked with weeds, an overgrown ditch on the spot where the little house stood—and nothing more. It is sad! I am sad at the thought! But let me turn to my story.

Afanasy Ivanovich Tovstogub and his wife Pulkheria Ivanovna were the old people of whom I was beginning to tell you. If I were a painter and wanted to portray Philemon and Baucis on canvas, I could choose no other models. Afanasy Ivanovich was sixty. Pulkheria Ivanovna was fifty-five. Afanasy Ivanovich was tall, always wore a camlet-covered sheepskin, used to sit bent up, and was invariably almost smiling, even though he were telling a story or simply listening. Pulkheria Ivanovna was rather grave and scarcely ever laughed; but in her face and eyes there was so much kindness, so much readiness to regale you with the best of all they had that you would certainly have found a smile superfluously sweet for her kind face. The faint wrinkles on their faces were drawn so charmingly that an artist would surely have stolen them; it seemed as though one could read in them their whole life, clear and serene—the life led by the old, typically Ukrainian, simple-hearted and at the same time wealthy families, always such a contrast to the meaner sort of Ukrainians who, struggling up from making tar and petty trading, swarm like locusts in the law-courts and public offices, fleece their fellow-villagers of their last kopek, inundate Petersburg with pettifoggers, make their pile at last and try to Russianize their surnames by adding V to the final O. No, they, like all the old-fashioned primitive Ukrainian families, were utterly different from such paltry contemptible creatures.

One could not look without sympathy at their mutual love.

They never addressed each other familiarly, but always with formality. "Was it you who broke the chair, Afanasy Ivanovich ?" "Never mind, don't be cross, Pulkheria Ivanovna, it was I." They had had no children, and so all their affection was concentrated on each other. At one time in his youth Afanasy Ivanovich was in the service and had been captain; but that was very long ago, that was all over, Afanasy Ivanovich himself scarcely ever recalled it. Afanasy Ivanovich was married at thirty when he was a fine young fellow and wore an embroidered waistcoat; he even eloped rather neatly with Pulkheria Ivanovna, whose relations opposed their marriage; but he thought very little about that now, at any rate he never spoke of it.

All these far-away extraordinary adventures had been followed by a peaceful and secluded life, by the soothing and harmonious dreams that you enjoy when you sit on a wooden balcony overlooking the garden, while a delicious rain keeps up a luxurious sound pattering on the leaves, flowing in gurgling streams and inducing a drowsiness in your limbs, while a rainbow hides behind the trees and in the form of a half-broken arch gleams in the sky with seven soft colours—or when you are swayed in a carriage that dives between green bushes while the quail of the steppes calls and the fragrant grass mingled with ears of corn and wild flowers thrusts itself in at the carriage doors, flicking you pleasantly on the hands and face.

Afanasy Ivanovich always listened with a pleasant smile to the guests who visited him; sometimes he talked himself, but more often he asked questions. He was not one of those old people who bore one with everlasting praises of old days or denunciations of the new; on the contrary, as he questioned you, he showed great interest and curiosity about the circumstances of your own life, your failures and successes, in which all kind-hearted old people show an interest, though it is a little like

the curiosity of a child who examines the seal on your watch at the same time as he talks to you. Then his face, one may say, was breathing with kindliness.

The rooms of the little house in which our old people lived were small and low-pitched, as they usually are in the houses of old-time folk. In each room there was an immense stove which covered nearly a third of the floor space. These rooms were terribly hot, for both Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna liked warmth. The stoves were all heated from the outer room, which was always filled almost up to the ceiling with straw, commonly used in the Ukraine instead of firewood. The crackle and flare of this burning straw made the outer room exceedingly pleasant on a winter's evening when ardent young men, chilled with the pursuit of some sunburnt charmer, ran in, clapping their hands. The walls of the rooms were adorned with a few large and small pictures in old-fashioned narrow frames. I am convinced that their owners had themselves long ago forgotten what they represented, and if some of them had been taken away they would probably not have noticed it. There were two big portraits painted in oils. One depicted a bishop, the other Peter III; a fly-blown duchesse de La Vallière looked out from a narrow frame. On both sides of the windows and above the doors there were numbers of little pictures which one looked upon as spots on the wall and so never examined them. In almost all the rooms the floor was of clay, kept with a neatness with which probably no parquet floor in a wealthy house lazily swept by a sleepy gentleman in livery has ever been kept.

Pulkheria Ivanovna's room was all surrounded with chests and boxes, big and little. Numbers of little bags and sacks of flower seeds, vegetable seeds, and melon seeds hung on the walls. Numbers of balls of different coloured wools and rags of old-fashioned gowns made half a century ago were stored in the

little chests and between the little chests in the corners. Pulkheria Ivanovna was a notable housewife and stored everything, though sometimes she could not herself have said to what use it could be put afterwards.

But the most remarkable thing in the house was the singing of the doors. As soon as morning came the singing of the doors could be heard all over the house. I cannot say why it was they sang: whether the rusty hinges were to blame for it or whether the mechanic who made them had concealed some secret in them; but it was remarkable that each door had its own voice—the door leading to the bedroom sang in the thinnest falsetto and the door into the dining-room in a husky bass; but the one to the outer room gave out a strange cracked and at the same time moaning sound, so that as one listened to it one heard distinctly, "Holy Saints! I am freezing!" I know that many people very much dislike this sound, the sound of creaking doors; but I am very fond of it, and if here I sometimes happen to hear a door creak, it seems at once to bring me a whiff of the country: the low-pitched little room lighted by a candle in an old-fashioned candlestick; supper already on the table; a dark May night peeping in from the garden through the open window at the table laid with knives and forks; the nightingale flooding garden, house, and far-away river with its trilling song; the tremor and rustle of branches and, my God! what a long string of memories stretches before me then!...

The chairs in the room were massive wooden ones such as were common in old days; they all had high carved backs and were without any kind of varnish or stain; they were not even upholstered, and were rather like the chairs on which bishops sit to this day. Little triangular tables in the corners and square ones before the sofa and the mirror in the thin gold frame carved with leaves which the flies had covered with black spots; in

front of the sofa a rug with birds on it that looked like flowers and flowers that looked like birds—almost all the furnishings of the unpretentious little house in which my old people lived. The maids' room was packed full of young girls, and girls who were no longer young, in striped petticoats; Pulkheria Ivanovna sometimes gave them some trifling sewing or set them to prepare the fruit, but for the most part they ran off to the kitchen and slept. Pulkheria Ivanovna thought it necessary to keep them in the house and looked strictly after their morals; but to her great surprise it was not long before the waist of some girl or other would grow much larger than usual. This seemed the more surprising as there was scarcely a bachelor in the house with the exception of the houseboy, who used to go about barefoot in a grey tail coat, and if he were not eating, was sure to be asleep. Pulkheria Ivanovna usually scolded the erring damsel and told her severely that she would not put up with it in the future.

A terrible number of flies were always buzzing on the window-panes, above whose notes rose the deep bass of a bumble-bee, sometimes accompanied by the shrill plaint of a wasp; then as soon as candles were brought all the swarm went to bed and covered the whole ceiling with a black cloud.

Afanasy Ivanovich took very little interest in farming his land, though he did drive out sometimes to the mowers and reapers and watched their labours rather attentively; the whole burden of management rested upon Pulkheria Ivanovna. Pulkheria Ivanovna's housekeeping consisted in continually locking up and unlocking the store-room, and in pickling, drying and preserving countless masses of fruits and vegetables. Her house was quite like a chemical laboratory. There was everlastingly a fire built under an apple-tree; and a cauldron or a copper pan of jam, jelly, or fruit cheese made with honey, sugar and I don't remember what else, was scarcely ever taken off the iron

tripod on which it stood. Under another tree the coachman was for ever distilling in a copper retort vodka with peach leaves or bird-cherry flowers or centaury or cherry stones, and at the end of the process was utterly unable to control his tongue, jabbered such nonsense that Pulkheria Ivanovna could make nothing of it, and had to go away to sleep it off in the kitchen. Such a quantity of all this stuff was boiled, salted and dried that the whole courtyard would probably have been drowned in it at last (for Pulkheria Ivanovna always liked to prepare a store for the future in addition to all that was reckoned necessary for use), if the larger half of it had not been eaten up by the serf-girls who, stealing into the store-room, would overeat themselves so frightfully that they were moaning and complaining of stomach-ache all day. Pulkheria Ivanovna had little chance of looking after the tilling of the fields or other branches of husbandry. The steward, in conjunction with the village elder, robbed them in a merciless fashion. They had adopted the habit of treating their master's forest land as though it were their own; they made numbers of sledges and sold them at the nearest fair; moreover, all the thick oaks they sold to the neighbouring Cossacks to be cut down for building mills. Only on one occasion Pulkheria Ivanovna had desired to inspect her forests. For this purpose a chaise was brought out with immense leather aprons which, as soon as the coachman shook the reins and the horses, who had served in the militia, set off, filled the air with strange sounds, so that a flute and a tambourine and a drum all seemed suddenly audible; every nail and iron bolt clanked so loudly that even at the mills it could be heard that the mistress was driving out of the yard, though the distance was fully a mile and a half. Pulkheria Ivanovna could not help noticing the terrible devastation in the forest and the loss of the oaks, which even in childhood she had known to be a hundred years old.

"Why is it, Nichipor," she said, addressing her steward who was on the spot, "that our little oaks have been so thinned? Mind that the hair on your head does not grow as thin."

"Why is it?" the steward said. "They have fallen down! They have simply fallen, struck by lightning, gnawed by maggots—they have fallen, my lady."

Pulkheria Ivanovna was completely satisfied with this answer, and on arriving home merely gave orders that the watch should be doubled in the garden near the Spanish cherry-trees and the big winter pears.

These worthy rulers, the steward and the elder, considered it quite superfluous to take all the flour to their master's granaries; they thought that the latter would be well off with half, and what is more, they took to the granaries the half that had begun to grow mouldy or had got wet and been rejected at the fair. But however much the steward and the elder stole; however gluttonously everyone ate on the place, from the housekeeper to the pigs who guzzled an immense number of plums and apples and often pushed the tree with their snouts to shake a perfect rain of fruit down from it; however much the sparrows and crows pecked; however many presents all the servants carried to their friends in other villages, even hauling off old linen and yarn from the store-rooms, all of which went into the ever-flowing stream, that is, to the pot-house; however much was stolen by visitors, phlegmatic coachmen and lackeys, yet the blessed earth produced everything in such abundance, and the needs of Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna were so modest, that all this terrible robbery made no perceptible impression on their prosperity.

Both the old people were very fond of good fare, as was the old-fashioned tradition of old-time landowners. As soon as the sun had risen (they always got up early) and as soon as the doors set up their varied concert, they were sitting down to a little

table, drinking coffee. When he had finished his coffee Afanasy Ivanovich would go out into the porch and, shaking his handkerchief, say, "Kish, kish! Get off the steps, you, geese!" In the yard he usually came across the steward. As a rule he entered into conversation with him, questioned him about the field labours with the greatest minuteness, made observations and gave orders which would have impressed anyone with his extraordinary knowledge of farming; and no novice would have dared to dream that he could steal from such a sharp-eyed master. But the steward was a wily old bird: he knew how he must answer and, what is more, how to manage the land.

After this Afanasy Ivanovich would go back indoors, and going up to his wife would say, "Well, Pulkheria Ivanovna, isn't it time perhaps for a snack of something?"

"What would you like to have now, Afanasy Ivanovich? Would you like lardy cakes or poppy-seed pies, or perhaps pickled mushrooms?"

"Perhaps mushrooms or pies," answered Afanasy Ivanovich; and the table would at once be laid with a cloth, pies and mushrooms.

An hour before dinner Afanasy Ivanovich would have another snack, would empty an old-fashioned silver goblet of vodka, would eat mushrooms, various sorts of dried fish and so on. They sat down to dinner at twelve o'clock. Besides the dishes and sauceboats, there stood on the table numbers of pots with closely covered lids so that no appetizing masterpiece of old-fashioned cookery lost its flavour. At dinner the conversation usually turned on subjects closely related to the dinner. "I fancy this porridge," Afanasy Ivanovich would say, "is a little bit burnt. Don't you think so, Pulkheria Ivanovna?" "No, Afanasy Ivanovich. You put a little more butter to it, then it won't taste burnt, or have some of this mushroom sauce; pour that over it!" "Perhaps,"

said Afanasy Ivanovich, passing his plate, "let us try how it would be."

After dinner Afanasy Ivanovich went to lie down for an hour, after which Pulkheria Ivanovna would take a sliced water-melon and say, "Try this nice melon, Afanasy Ivanovich."

"Don't you be so sure of it, Pulkheria Ivanovna, because it is red in the middle," Afanasy Ivanovich would say, taking a good slice. "There are some that are red and are not nice."

But the melon quickly disappeared. After that Afanasy Ivanovich would eat a few pears and go for a walk in the garden with Pulkheria Ivanovna. On returning home Pulkheria Ivanovna would go to look after household affairs, while he sat under an awning turned towards the courtyard and watched the storeroom continually displaying and concealing its interior and the serf-girls pushing one another as they brought in or carried out heaps of trifles of all sorts in wooden boxes, sieves, trays and other receptacles for holding fruit. A little afterwards he sent for Pulkheria Ivanovna or went himself to her and said, "What shall I have to eat, Pulkheria Ivanovna?"

"What would you like?" Pulkheria Ivanovna would say. "Shall I go and tell them to bring you the fruit-dumplings I ordered to keep warm for you?"

"That would be nice," Afanasy Ivanovich answered.

"Or perhaps you would like some jelly?"

"That would be good too," Afanasy Ivanovich would answer. Then all this was promptly brought him and duly eaten.

Before supper Afanasy Ivanovich would have another snack of something. At half past nine they sat down to supper. After supper they at once went to bed, and a universal stillness reigned in this active and at the same time tranquil home.

The room in which Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulkheria Ivanovna slept was so hot that not many people could have stayed in

it for several hours; but Afanasy Ivanovich in order to be even hotter used to sleep on the stove-ledge, though the intense heat made him get up several times in the night and walk about the room. Sometimes Afanasy Ivanovich would even moan. Then Pulkheria Ivanovna would ask, "Why, what's the trouble with you, Afanasy Ivanovich?"

"Goodness only knows, Pulkheria Ivanovna; I feel as though I had a little stomach-ache," said Afanasy Ivanovich.

"Hadn't you better eat something, Afanasy Ivanovich?"

"I don't know whether it would do me any good, Pulkheria Ivanovna! What should I eat, though?"

"Sour milk or some stewed dried pears."

"Perhaps I might try it, anyway," said Afanasy Ivanovich.

A sleepy serf-girl went off to rummage in the cupboards, and Afanasy Ivanovich would eat a plateful, after which he would usually say, "Now I seem to feel better."

Sometimes, if it was fine weather and rather warm indoors, Afanasy Ivanovich being in good spirits liked to make fun of Pulkheria Ivanovna and talk of something.

"Pulkheria Ivanovna," he would say, "what if our house were suddenly on fire, what would we do?"

"Heaven forbid!" Pulkheria Ivanovna would say, crossing herself.

"But suppose our house were burnt down, where should we go then?"

"God knows what you are saying, Afanasy Ivanovich! How is it possible that our house could be burnt down? God will not permit it."

"Well, but if it were burnt down?"

"Oh, then we would move into the kitchen. You should have for the time the little room that the housekeeper has now."

"But if the kitchen were burnt too?"

"What next! God will preserve us from such a calamity as both house and kitchen burnt down all at once! Well, then we would move into the store-room while a new house was being built."

"And if the store-room were burnt down?"

"God knows what you are saying! I don't want to listen to you! It's a sin to say it, and God will punish you for saying such things!"

And Afanasy Ivanovich, pleased at having made fun of Pulkheria Ivanovna, sat smiling in his chair.

But the old couple seemed most of all interesting to me on the occasions when they had guests. Then everything in their house assumed a different aspect. These good-natured people lived, one may say, for visitors. The best of everything they had was all brought out. They vied with each other in trying to regale you with everything their husbandry produced. But what pleased me most of all was that in their solicitude there was no trace of unctuousness. This hospitality and readiness to please was so gently expressed in their faces, was so in keeping with them that the guests could not help falling in with their wishes, which were the expression of the pure serene simplicity of their kindly guileless souls. This hospitality was something quite different from the way in which a clerk of some government office who has been helped in his career by your efforts entertains you, calling you his benefactor and cringing at your feet. The visitor was on no account to leave on the same day, he absolutely had to stay the night. "How could you set off on such a long journey at so late an hour!" Pulkheria Ivanovna always said (the guest usually lived three or four versts away).

"Of course not," Afanasy Ivanovich said, "you never know what may happen: robbers or other evil-minded men may attack you."

"God preserve us from robbers!" said Pulkheria Ivanovna.

"And why talk of such things at night? It's not a question of robbers, but it's dark, it's not fit for driving at all. Besides, your coachman ... I know your coachman, he is so frail, and such a little man, any horse would be too much for him; and besides he has probably had a drop by now and is asleep somewhere." And the guest was forced to remain; but the evening spent in the low-pitched hot room, the kindly, warming and soporific talk, the steam rising from the food on the table, always nourishing and cooked in first-class fashion, was compensation for him. In my mind's eye I can still clearly see Afanasy Ivanovich sitting bent in his chair with his invariable smile, listening to his visitor with attention and even delight! Often the talk touched on politics. The guest, who also very rarely left his village, would often with a significant air and a mysterious expression trot out his conjectures, telling them that the French had a secret agreement with the English to let Bonaparte out again in order to attack Russia, or simply prophesying war in the near future; and then Afanasy Ivanovich, pretending not to look at Pulkheria Ivanovna, would often say, "I think I shall go to the war myself; why shouldn't I go to the war?"

"There he goes again!" Pulkheria Ivanovna interrupted. "Don't you believe him," she said, turning to the guest. "How could an old man like him go to the war! The first soldier would shoot him! Yes, indeed he would! He'd simply take aim and shoot him."

"Well," said Afanasy Ivanovich, "and I'll shoot him."

"Just listen to him!" Pulkheria Ivanovna caught him up. "How could he go to the war! And his pistols have been rusty for years and are lying in the cupboard. You should just see them: why, gunpowder would burst their barrels before they'd fire a shot. And he'd blow off his hands and disfigure his face and be wretched for the rest of his days!"

"Well," said Afanasy Ivanovich, "I'd buy myself new weapons; I'll take my sabre or a Cossack lance."

"That's all nonsense. An idea comes into his head and he begins talking!" Pulkheria Ivanovna interrupted with vexation. "I know he is only joking, but yet I don't like to hear about it. That's the way he always talks; sometimes one listens and listens till it frightens one."

But Afanasy Ivanovich, pleased at having scared Pulkheria Ivanovna a little, would laugh bending up in his chair.

Pulkheria Ivanovna was most attractive to me when she was treating a guest at the table. "This," she would say, taking a cork out of a carafe, "is vodka mulled with milfoil and sage—if anyone has a pain in the shoulder-blades or loins, it is very good; now this is mulled with centaury—if anyone has a ringing in the ears or a rash on the face, it is very good; and this now is distilled with peach stones—take a glass, smell it, delicious, isn't it? If anyone getting up in the morning knocks his head against a corner of the cupboard or table and a bump comes up on his forehead, he has only to drink one glass of it before dinner and it takes it away entirely; it all passes off that very minute, as though it had never been there at all." Then followed a similar account of the other carafes, which all had some healing properties. After burdening the guest with all these remedies she would lead him up to a number of dishes. "These are mushrooms with wild thyme! These are with cloves and hazel-nuts! A Turkish woman taught me to salt them in the days when we still had Turkish prisoners here. She was such a nice woman, and one would never have imagined that she professed the Turkish religion: she went about almost exactly as we do; only she wouldn't eat pork; she said it was forbidden somewhere in their law. And these are mushrooms prepared with black currant leaves and nutmeg! And these are big

pumpkins; it's the first time I have pickled them in vinegar; I don't know what they'll be like! I learnt the secret from Father Ivan; first of all you must lay some oak leaves in a tub and then sprinkle with pepper and saltpetre and then put in the flower of the hawkweed, take the flowers and arrange them with stalks uppermost. And here are the little pies; these are cheese pies. And those are the ones Afanasy Ivanovich is very fond of, made with cabbage and buckwheat."

"Yes," Afanasy Ivanovich would add, "I am very fond of them: they are soft and a little sourish."

As a rule Pulkheria Ivanovna was in the best of spirits when she had guests. Dear old woman! She was entirely given up to her visitors. I liked staying with them, and although I overate myself fearfully, as indeed all their visitors did, and though that was very bad for me, I was always glad to go and see them. But I wonder whether the very air of the Ukraine has not some peculiar property that promotes digestion; for if anyone were to venture to eat in that way here, there is no doubt he would find himself lying in his coffin instead of his bed.

Good old people! But my account of them is approaching a very melancholy incident which transformed for ever the life of that peaceful nook. This incident is the more impressive because it arose from such an insignificant cause. But such is the strange order of things: trifling causes have always given rise to great events, and on the other hand great undertakings frequently ended in insignificant results. Some military leader rallies all the forces of his state, carries on a war for several years, his generals cover themselves with glory, and in the end it all results in gaining a bit of land in which there is no room to plant a potato; while sometimes two sausage-makers of two towns quarrel over some nonsense, and in the end the towns are drawn into the quarrel, then villages, and then the whole

kingdom. But let us abandon these reflections: they are out of keeping here; besides I am not fond of reflections, so long as they get no further than being reflections.

Pulkheria Ivanovna had a little grey cat, which almost always lay curled up at her feet. Pulkheria Ivanovna sometimes stroked her and with one finger scratched her neck, which the spoilt cat stretched as high as she could. I cannot say that Pulkheria Ivanovna was excessively fond of her, she was simply attached to her from being used to seeing her about. Afanasy Ivanovich, however, often teased her about her affection for it.

"I don't see, Pulkheria Ivanovna, what you find in the cat, what use is she? If you had a dog, then it would be a different matter: one can take a dog out shooting, but what use is a cat?"

"Oh, be quiet, Afanasy Ivanovich," said Pulkheria Ivanovna. "You are simply fond of talking and nothing else. A dog is not clean, a dog makes a mess, a dog breaks everything, while a cat is a quiet creature; she does no harm to anyone."

Cats and dogs were all the same to Afanasy Ivanovich, however; he only said it to tease Pulkheria Ivanovna a little.

Beyond their garden they had a big forest which had been spared by the enterprising steward, perhaps because the sound of the axe would have reached the ears of Pulkheria Ivanovna. It was wild and neglected, the old tree trunks were covered with overgrown nut bushes and looked like the feathered legs of trumpeter pigeons. Wild cats lived in this forest. Wild forest cats must not be confounded with the bold rascals who run about on the roofs of houses; in spite of their fierce disposition the latter, being in cities, are far more civilized than the inhabitants of the forest. Unlike the town cats the latter are for the most part wild and gloomy creatures; they are always gaunt and lean, they mew in a coarse uncultured voice. They sometimes scratch their way underground into the very store-

houses and steal bacon; they even penetrate into the kitchen, springing suddenly in at the open window when they see that the cook has gone off into the high grass.

In fact they are unacquainted with any noble sentiments; they live by plunder, and murder little sparrows in their nests. These cats had for a long time past sniffed through a hole under the storehouse at Pulkheria Ivanovna's gentle little cat and at last they enticed her away, as a company of soldiers entices a silly peasant girl. Pulkheria Ivanovna noticed the disappearance of the cat and sent to look for her; but the cat was not found. Three days passed; Pulkheria Ivanovna was sorry to lose her, but then forgot all about her. One day when she was inspecting her vegetable garden and was returning with fresh green cucumbers plucked by her own hand for Afanasy Ivanovich, her ear caught a most pitiful mew. As though by instinct she called, "Puss, puss!" and all at once her grey cat, lean and skinny, came from the high grass; it was evident that she had not tasted food for several days. Pulkheria Ivanovna went on calling her, but the cat stood mewing and did not venture to come close; it was clear that she had grown very wild during her absence. Pulkheria Ivanovna went on, calling the cat, who timidly followed her right up to the fence. At last, recognizing old familiar places, she went indoors. Pulkheria Ivanovna at once ordered milk and meat to be brought her and, sitting before the cat, enjoyed the greediness with which her poor little favourite swallowed piece after piece and lapped up the milk. The little grey fugitive grew fatter almost before her eyes and soon did not eat so greedily. Pulkheria Ivanovna stretched out her hand to stroke her, but the ungrateful creature had evidently grown too much accustomed to the ways of wild cats, or had adopted the romantic principle that poverty with love is better than a palace, and, indeed, the wild cats

were as poor as church mice; anyway, she sprang out of a window and no one of the houseserfs could catch her.

The old lady sank into thought. "It was my death coming for me!" she said to herself, and nothing could distract her mind. All day she was sad. In vain did Afanasy Ivanovich joke and try to find out why she was so melancholy all of a sudden: Pulkheria Ivanovna wouldn't answer, or answered in a way that could not possibly satisfy Afanasy Ivanovich. Next day she was perceptibly thinner.

"What is the matter with you, Pulkheria Ivanovna ? You must be ill."

"No, I am not ill, Afanasy Ivanovich! I want to tell you something very important; I know that I shall die this summer: my death has already come to fetch me!"

Afanasy Ivanovich's lips twitched painfully. He tried, however, to overcome his gloomy feeling and with a smile said, "God knows what you are saying, Pulkheria Ivanovna! You must have drunk some peach-vodka instead of the concoction you usually drink."

"No, Afanasy Ivanovich, I have not drunk peach-vodka," said Pulkheria Ivanovna. And Afanasy Ivanovich was sorry that he had so teased her; he looked at her and a tear hung on his eyelash.

"I beg you, Afanasy Ivanovich, to carry out my last will," said Pulkheria Ivanovna; "when I die, bury me by the church fence. Put my grey dress on me, the one with the little flowers on a brown ground. Don't put on me my satin dress with the crimson stripes: a dead woman has no need of a dress—what use is it to her?—while it will be of use to you: have a fine dressing-gown made of it, so that when visitors come to see you you can show yourself and welcome them, looking decent."

"God knows what you are saying, Pulkheria Ivanovna!"

said Afanasy Ivanovich. "Death may be a long way off, but you are frightening me already with such sayings."

"No, Afanasy Ivanovich, I know now when my death will come. Don't grieve for me, though: I am an old woman and have lived long enough, and you are old, too; we shall soon meet in the other world."

But Afanasy Ivanovich was sobbing like a child.

"It's a sin to weep, Afanasy Ivanovich! Don't be sinful and anger God by your sorrow. I am not sorry that I am dying; there is only one thing I am sorry about" (a heavy sigh interrupted her words for a minute), "I am sorry that I do not know in whose care to leave you, who will look after you when I am dead. You are like a little child. You need somebody who loves you to look after you."

At these words there was an expression of such deep, such distressed heartfelt pity on her face that I doubt whether anyone could have looked at her at that moment unmoved.

"Mind, Yavdokha," she said, turning to the housekeeper whom she had purposely sent for, "that when I die you look after your master, watch over him like the apple of your eye, like your own child. Mind that what he likes is always cooked for him in the kitchen; that you always give him clean linen and clothes; that when visitors come you dress him in his best, or else he will come out in his old dressing-gown, because even now he often forgets when it's a holiday and when it's a working day. Don't take your eyes off him, Yavdokha; I will pray for you in the next world and God will reward you. Do not forget, Yavdokha, you are old, you have not long to live—do not take a sin upon your soul. If you do not look after him you will have no happiness in life. I myself will beseech God not to give you a happy end. And you will be unhappy yourself, and your children will be unhappy, and all your family will not have the blessing of God in anything."

Poor old woman! At that minute she was not thinking of the great moment awaiting her, nor of her soul, nor of her own future life; she was thinking only of her poor companion with whom she had spent her life and whom she was leaving helpless and forlorn. With extraordinary efficiency she arranged everything, so that Afanasy Ivanovich should not notice her absence when she was gone. Her conviction that her end was at hand was so strong, and her state of mind was so attuned to it, that she did in fact take to her bed a few days later and could eat nothing. Afanasy Ivanovich never left her bedside and was all solicitude. "Perhaps you would eat a little of something, Pulkheria Ivanovna," he said, looking with anxiety into her eyes. But Pulkheria Ivanovna said nothing. At last after a long silence her lips stirred, as if she was trying to say something—and her breathing ceased.

Afanasy Ivanovich was absolutely overwhelmed. It seemed to him so uncanny that he did not even weep; he looked at her with dull eyes as though he could not grasp the significance of the corpse.

The dead woman was laid on the table dressed in the frock she had herself fixed upon, her arms were crossed and a wax candle put in her hands—he looked at all this apathetically. Numbers of people of all ranks filled the courtyard; numbers of guests came to the funeral; long tables were laid out in the courtyard; they were covered with masses of funeral groats, of home-made beverages and pies. The guests talked and wept, gazed at the dead woman, discussed her qualities and looked at him; but he himself looked queerly at it all. The coffin was carried out at last, the people crowded after it and he followed it. The priests were in full vestments, the sun was shining, babies were crying in their mothers' arms, larks were singing and children raced and skipped about the road. At last the

coffin was put down beside the grave; he was bidden to approach and kiss the dead woman for the last time. He went up and kissed her; there were tears in his eyes, but they were somehow apathetic tears. The coffin was lowered, the priest took the spade and first threw in a handful of earth; the deep rich voices of the deacon and the two sacristans sang "Eternal Memory" under the pure cloudless sky; the labourers took up their spades and soon the earth covered the grave and made it level. At that moment he pressed forward; everyone stepped aside and made way for him, anxious to know what he meant to do. He raised his eyes, looked at them vacantly and said, "So you have buried her already! What for?" He broke off and said no more.

But when he was home again, when he saw that his room was empty, that even the chair Pulkheria Ivanovna used to sit on had been taken away—he sobbed, sobbed violently, inconsolably, and tears flowed from his lustreless eyes like a stream.

Five years have passed since then. There is no grief but time wears away. No passion survives in the unequal combat with it. I knew a man in the flower of his youth and strength, full of true nobility of character. I knew him in love, tenderly, passionately, madly, fiercely, humbly; and before me and almost before my very eyes, the object of his passion, a tender creature, lovely as an angel, was struck down by merciless death. I have never seen such awful depths of spiritual suffering, such frenzied poignant grief, such devouring despair as overwhelmed the luckless lover. I had never imagined that a man could create for himself such a hell with no shadow, no shape, no semblance of hope.... People tried not to leave him alone; all weapons with which he might have killed himself were hidden from him. A fortnight later he suddenly mastered himself, and began laughing and jesting; he was given his freedom, and the first use he made of it was to buy a pistol. One day his

family were terrified by the sudden sound of a shot; they ran into the room and saw him stretched on the floor with his skull shattered. A doctor who happened to be there at the time and whose skill was famous, saw signs of life in him, found that the wound was not absolutely fatal, and to the amazement of everyone the young man recovered. The watch kept on him was stricter than ever. Even at dinner a knife was not laid for him and everything was removed with which he could have hurt himself; but in a short time he found another opportunity and threw himself under the wheels of a passing carriage. An arm and a leg were broken; but again he recovered. A year after that I saw him in a roomful of people; he was sitting at a table saying gaily, "*Petite ouverte,*" as he covered a card, and behind him, with her elbows on the back of his chair, was standing his young wife, turning over his counters.

At the end of the five years after Pulkheria Ivanovna's death I was in those parts and drove to Afanasy Ivanovich's little farm to visit my old neighbour, in whose house I used at one time to spend the day pleasantly and always to overeat myself with choicest masterpieces of its hospitable mistress.

As I approached the courtyard the house seemed to me twice as old as it had been: the peasants' huts were lying completely on one side, as no doubt their owners were too; the palisade and the hurdle round the yard were completely broken down, and I myself saw the cook pull sticks out of it to heat the stove, though she need have only taken two steps further to reach the faggot-stack. Sadly I drove up to the steps; the same old Neros and Trustys, blind or lame by now, barked, wagging their fluffy tails covered with burdocks. An old man came out to greet me. Yes, it was he! I knew him at once; but he stooped twice as much as before. He knew me and greeted me with the old familiar smile. I followed him

indoors. It seemed as though everything was as before. But I noticed a strange disorder in everything, an unmistakable absence of something. In fact I experienced the strange feeling which comes upon us when for the first time we enter the house of a widower whom we have known in old days inseparable from the wife who has shared his life. The feeling is the same when we see a man crippled whom we have always known in health. Everything bespoke the absence of careful Pulkheria Ivanovna: at table a knife was laid without a handle; the dishes were not cooked with the same skill. I did not want to ask about the farm, I was afraid even to look at the farm buildings. When we sat down to dinner, a maid tied a napkin round Afanasy Ivanovich, and it was well she did so, as without it he would have spilt sauce all over his dressing-gown. I tried to entertain him and told him various items of news; he listened with the same smile, but from time to time his eyes were completely vacant, and his thoughts did not stray, but vanished. Often he lifted a spoonful of porridge to his nose instead of putting it to his mouth; instead of sticking his fork into a piece of chicken, he prodded the decanter, and then the maid, taking his hand, brought it back to the chicken. We sometimes waited several minutes for the next course. Afanasy Ivanovich himself noticed it and said, "Why is it they are so long bringing the food?" But I saw through the crack in the door that the boy who carried away our plates was asleep and nodding on a bench, not thinking of his duties at all.

"This is the dish," said Afanasy Ivanovich, when we were handed curd cakes with sour cream; "this is the dish," he went on, and I noticed that his voice began quivering and a tear was ready to drop from his leaden eyes, but he did his utmost to restrain it. "This is the dish which my ... my ... dear ... my dear...." And all at once he burst into tears; his hand fell on

the plate, the plate turned upside down, slipped and was smashed, and the sauce was spilt all over him. He sat vacantly, vacantly held the spoon; and tears like a stream, like a ceaselessly flowing fountain flowed and flowed on the napkin that covered him.

"My God!" I thought, looking at him. "Five years of all-destroying time—an old man already apathetic, an old man whose life one would have thought had never once been stirred by a strong feeling, whose whole life seemed to consist in sitting on a high chair, in eating dried fish and pears, in telling good-natured stories—and such long, such bitter grief! What is stronger in us—passion or habit? Or are all the violent impulses, all the whirl of our desires and boiling passions only the consequence of our ardent age, and is it only through youth that they seem deep and shattering?"

Be that as it may, at that moment all our passions seemed like child's play beside this effect of long, slow, almost insensible habit. Several times he struggled to utter his wife's name, but, half-way through the word, his quiet and ordinary face worked convulsively and his childish weeping cut me to the very heart. No, those were not the tears of which old men are usually so lavish, as they complain of their pitiful position and their troubles; they were not the tears which they drop over a glass of punch, either. No! they were tears which brimmed over uninvited from the accumulated rankling pain of a heart already turning cold.

He did not live long after that. I heard lately of his death. It is strange though that the circumstances of his end had some resemblance to those of Pulkheria Ivanovna's death. One day Afanasy Ivanovich ventured to go on a little walk in the garden. As he was walking slowly along a path with his usual absent-mindedness, without a thought of any kind in his head, he had a strange adventure. He suddenly heard someone behind him pronounce in a fairly distinct voice, "Afanasy Ivanovich!" He

turned round but there was absolutely nobody there; he looked in all directions, he peered into the bushes—no one anywhere. It was a still day and the sun was shining. He pondered for a minute; his face seemed to brighten and he brought out at last, "It's Pulkheria Ivanovna calling me!"

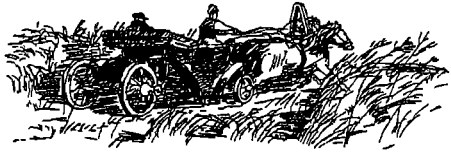
You must doubtless have heard some time or other a voice calling you by name, which simple people explain as a soul grieving for a human being and calling him, and after that, they say, death follows inevitably. I must own I was always frightened by that mysterious call. I remember that in childhood I often heard it. Sometimes suddenly someone behind me distinctly uttered my name. Usually on such occasions it was a very bright and sunny day; not one leaf in the garden was stirred; the stillness was deathlike; even the grasshopper left off churring for the moment; there was not a soul in the garden. But I confess that if the wildest and most tempestuous night had lashed me with all the fury of the elements, alone in the middle of an impenetrable forest, I should not have been so terrified as by that awful stillness in the midst of a cloudless day. I usually ran out of the garden in a great panic, hardly able to breathe, and was only reassured when I met some person, the sight of whom dispelled the terrible spiritual loneliness.

Afanasy Ivanovich surrendered completely to his inner conviction that Pulkheria Ivanovna was calling him; he submitted with the readiness of an obedient child, wasted away, coughed, melted like a candle and at last flickered out, as it does when there is nothing left to sustain its feeble flame. "Lay me beside Pulkheria Ivanovna," that was all he said before his end.

His desire was carried out and he was buried near the church beside Pulkheria Ivanovna's grave. The guests were fewer at the funeral, but there were just as many beggars and peasants. The little house was now completely emptied. The enterprising

steward and the elder hauled away to their huts all that was left of the old-fashioned goods and furniture, which the housekeeper had not been able to carry off. Soon a distant kinsman arrived, I cannot say from where, the heir to the estate, who had been a lieutenant, I don't know in what regiment, and was a terrible reformer. He saw at once the great slackness and disorganization in the management of the land; he made up his mind to change all that radically, to improve things and bring everything into order. He bought six splendid English sickles, pinned a special number on each hut, and managed so well that within six months his estate was put under the supervision of a board of trustees.

The sage trustees (consisting of an ex-assessor and a staff captain in a faded uniform) had within a very short time left not a single fowl nor egg. The huts, which were almost lying on the earth, fell down completely; the peasants gave themselves up to drunkenness and most of them ran away. The real owner, who got on, however, pretty comfortably with his trustees and used to drink punch with them, very rarely visited his estate and never stayed long. To this day he drives about to all the fairs in the Ukraine, carefully inquiring the prices of all sorts of produce sold wholesale, such as flour, hemp, honey and so on; but he only buys small trifles, such as flints, a nail to clean out his pipe, in fact nothing which exceeds at the utmost a ruble in price.



CHAPTER ONE

"WELL, turn round, son! What a scarecrow you look! What sort of a priest's under-cassock have you got on? Is that the way they all dress at the Academy?"

With such words did old Bulba greet his two sons, who, after finishing their education at the Kiev Seminary, had returned home to their father.

His sons had just dismounted from their horses. They were stout fellows; both of them looked bashful, as young collegians are wont to do. Their firm, healthy faces were covered with the first down of manhood, which had, as yet, never known the razor.

They were greatly discomfited by such a paternal welcome, and stood quite still with their eyes fixed on the ground.

"Stay! Let me have a good look at you," he went on, turning them round. "What long coats you have on! What coats indeed! The world has never seen their like before. Just run a little, one of you! I would fain see if you do not get tangled up in the skirts and fall down."

"Don't laugh at us, Father, don't laugh!" said the elder son at last.

"Look how proud he is! And why shouldn't I laugh?"

"Because, though you are my father, if you laugh, by God, I will give you a thrashing!"

"What! You devil's son! You would thrash your own father?" cried Taras Bulba, falling back a few paces in amazement.

"What if you are my father? I will allow no one to insult me."

"And how would you fight me? With your fists, eh?"

"Any way."

"Well, let it be with fists, then," said Taras Bulba, tucking up his sleeves. "I will see what sort of a man you are with your fists!"

And father and son, in lieu of a pleasant greeting after long separation, began to pommel each other on ribs, middle, and chest, now retreating and eyeing each other, now attacking afresh.

"Look ye, good people! the old man has gone mad! he's clean out of his mind!" cried the boys' pale-faced, thin, kindly mother, who was standing in the doorway, and had not yet had time to embrace her darling children. "The children are but just home, for more than a year we have not seen them; and he takes it into his head to start fighting with them!"

"Why, he fights pretty well!" said Bulba, pausing. "By God, he fights well!" he continued, patting down his clothes. "So well

that perhaps I'd better not have fought him at all. He will make a good Cossack! Well, son, welcome home! You can give your father a kiss now!" And father and son fell to kissing each other. "That's right, son! Thrash everyone as you've drubbed me! Give quarter to none! But your garb is funny all the same. What rope is this dangling here? And you, you booby, why do you stand there with your hands hanging idle?" he called, turning to the youngest. "Come now, you hound's son, aren't you going to give me a drubbing?"

"That's all you can think of!" cried the mother, who was already hugging her youngest. "Who ever heard of children fighting their own father? As if he has nothing better to do now: he's just a child, he has come ever so far, he is tired. . . ." (The child was over twenty, and a good six feet high.) "He ought to be resting and eating something, and you want to make him fight!"

"Ah, you're a milksop, I see!" said Bulba. "Don't listen to your mother, sonny: she is a woman, and knows nothing. Do you want to be a tenderling all your life? The open field and a good horse—that's the kind of life you'll live! Look at this sabre—that's your mother! It is all rubbish they rammed into your heads—the Academy, and all your books and primers, and philosophy, and the devil knows what; I spit upon it all!" Here Bulba added a word which is not used in print. "I had better send you next week, not later, to Zaporozhye. That's where you'll get all the education you need. There's a school for you; there alone will you get brains!"

"Are they to stay only a week at home?" the gaunt old woman asked mournfully, with tears in her eyes. "The poor boys will have no time to celebrate their home-coming, no time to get to know their own home, and I'll have no time to feast my eyes on them!"

"Have done with your whining, old woman! A Cossack's not made to spend his life with women. You would like to hide both of them under your petticoats, and sit upon them as a hen sits on eggs. Go now, go, and put everything you have in the house on the board. We want none of your dumplings, honey-cakes, poppy-pasties, none of your pastry. Give us a whole sheep, a goat, forty-year-old mead; yes, and plenty of *horilka*, not with your fangles, your raisins and rubbish, but pure, foamy *horilka* that sparkles and hisses madly."

Bulba led his sons into the best room of the house, whence two pretty maidservants wearing red necklaces, who had been putting the house in order, ran out hastily. They were either frightened by the arrival of the young masters, who were so strict with everybody, or else they merely wanted to keep up the feminine custom of screaming and flying at the sight of a man, and then covering their blushing faces with their sleeves. The room was furnished in the taste of that period, a period surviving only in songs and folk legends which are no longer sung in the Ukraine by the blind, bearded old minstrels, who used to sing them to the soft strumming of the *bandura*, surrounded by crowds of country-folk; in the fashion of those warlike and stern times when the Ukraine was fighting her first battles against the Union of the Greek Church with Popery. The walls, floor, and ceiling were neatly plastered with coloured clay. The walls were hung with sabres, riding-whips, bird and fish nets, guns, a powder-horn fancifully inlaid, a golden curb-bit, and tether-ropes with silver fastenings. The windows in the room were small, with dim, round-cut panes, such as are now found only in ancient churches, and through which one could only see by raising the sash. The windows and doors were rimmed with red. On shelves in the corners stood ewers, flasks, and flagons of green and blue glass, chased silver goblets, and gilded cups of

all manner of workmanship—Venetian, Turkish, Circassian, which had found their way into Bulba's possession by various ways, at third and fourth hand, a thing quite common in those adventurous days. The elmwood benches, which ran all round the room; the huge table in the front corner, under the icons; the wide stove with its many nooks and projections, laid out with varicoloured glazed tiles, with stove-ledges between the stove and the wall—all this was familiar enough to our two youths, who had every year walked home for the holidays. Yes, walk they did, for they had no horses of their own yet and because it was not the custom to permit collegians to ride on horseback. They had nought save their long scalp-locks to show for their manhood, and these every Cossack wearing arms was entitled to pull. It was only upon graduation that Bulba had sent them a pair of young stallions from his herd.

In honour of his sons' return Bulba had summoned all the *sotniks* and all the officers of his regiment who happened to be at home; and when two of them came together with his old comrade Captain Dmitro Tovkach, he immediately presented his sons to them, saying, "See what fine lads they are! I shall send them to the Setch very soon." The guests congratulated Bulba as well as the two youths and said that they were doing the right thing, that there was no better school for a young man than the Zaporozhian Setch.

"Well, brother officers, sit you all down, each where he likes best, at the table. Now, sons, first let us drink some *horilka*!" so spoke Bulba. "God's blessing be upon us! Here's to your health, my sons; to yours, Ostap, and to yours, Andriy. God grant you luck in war, that you may beat all misbelievers: Turks, and Tatars, and Poles, too—if the Poles begin aught against our faith. Well, push up your cups; isn't the *horilka* good? And what is the Latin for *horilka*? Ah, there you are, son; the Latins

were fools: they did not even know there was *horilka* in the world. What was the name of the fellow who wrote Latin verses? I'm not much of a scholar, so I'm not sure—was it Horace?"

"That's just like him!" thought the elder son, Ostap. "He knows everything, the old dog, yet pretends to know nothing."

"I suppose the Archimandrite did not let you have so much as a whiff of *horilka*," Taras went on. "Confess now, my boys, did they not lash you good and proper with fresh cherry-rods about the back and everything else a Cossack has? And perhaps, when you grew too clever, they even flogged you with knouts? And not only on Saturdays, I should think, but on Wednesdays and Thursdays to boot?"

"It's no good talking about the past," Ostap coolly answered. "What has been is done with."

"Let anyone try it now," said Andriy, "let any man touch me now! Why, as soon as I catch sight of a Tatar, I'll show him what manner of thing a Cossack sabre is!"

"Well said, son, well said, by God! And since it's come to that, I'm going with you, too! By God, I am. What the devil should I stay here for? Become a sower of buckwheat, a housekeeper, tend sheep and swine, and wear my wife's petticoats? The plague take her! I am a Cossack, I'll have none of it! What if there is no war now? I'll go with you to Zaporozhye just the same and make merry there. By God, I will!" And old Bulba grew warmer and warmer until finally, having worked himself into a real rage, he rose from the table, struck a dignified pose, and stamped his foot. "We will go tomorrow! Why should we put it off? What enemy can we await here? What do we want with this hut? What are all these things to us? What do we want with these pots?" With these words he began to smash the ewers and flasks and to hurl them on the ground.

The poor old woman, well used to her husband's ways, remained seated on a bench and watched him sadly. She did not dare say anything; but when she heard the decision which she dreaded so much, she could not keep back her tears; she gazed at the children she was doomed so soon to part with, and the force of mute despair which seemed to quiver in her eyes and convulsively compressed lips defied all description.

Bulba was fearfully stubborn. He was one of those characters which first emerged in the grim fifteenth century, in a half-nomadic corner of Europe, when the whole of primitive Southern Russia, deserted by its princes, was laid waste and burned to the ground by the irresistible incursions of Mongolian spoilers; when, robbed of house and home, men grew daring; when they settled on the ashes of their homes, amidst formidable foes and perpetual perils, and grew used to looking them straight in the face and forgot there was such a thing as fear in the world; when a warlike flame fired the Slavonic spirit, which had remained peaceable for centuries, and begot Cossackdom—a free, riotous outgrowth of the Russian character—and when all the river-banks, fords and ferries, and every suitable spot in the river country, were sown with Cossacks, whose number no man knew; and rightly did their bold comrades answer the Sultan, who inquired their numbers, "Who knoweth! We are spread over all the steppe: on every hillock will ye find a Cossack." This indeed was a remarkable manifestation of Russian strength, struck out of the people's bosom, as out of flint, by the steel of dire misfortune. Instead of the old principalities and small towns, crowded with huntsmen and whippers-in, instead of the petty princes, who warred and bartered their towns amongst themselves, there sprang up formidable settlements and embattled *kurens* bound together by common danger and common hatred of the heathen raiders. As we all know from history,

it was their incessant struggle and adventurous spirit that saved Europe from the savage incursions which threatened to overwhelm her. The kings of Poland, who became the sovereigns, albeit weak and remote, of these vast lands in place of the apanaged princes, realized the value of the Cossacks and the advantages of their warlike, vigilant mode of life. They flattered them and encouraged their ways. Under their remote rule, the Hetmans, chosen from amongst the Cossacks themselves, transformed the settlements and *kurens* into regiments and military districts. This was not a regular standing army; there was no trace of it; but in the event of war it took but eight days for every man to appear horsed, armed from head to foot, and ready to serve for but one ducat from the king; and in two weeks' time such an army was gathered as no regular levy in mass could have ever banded together. Once the campaign was over, the warrior went back to his field or pasture, to the Dnieper ferries, betook himself to fishing, trading, or brewing beer, and was once more a free Cossack. Rightly did their foreign contemporaries marvel at their singular aptitude. There was no craft the Cossack did not know: he could make wine, build a cart, grind powder, do a blacksmith's and a locksmith's work, and besides all this he could revel in the most riotous manner, could drink and feast as only a Russian can—all this he could do and more. Besides the *registered* Cossacks, whose duty it was to join the army in case of war, troops of mounted volunteers could always be mustered in time of urgent need. The *esauls* had but to make a round of the market-places and squares of all the villages and towns, and there, standing up in a cart, to shout at the top of their voices:

"Ho, you beer-brewers and wine-makers! Have done with your beer-brewing, your dawdling on stove-ledges, feeding the flies with your fat carcasses! Come and win knightly fame and

honour! And you, ploughmen, you, sowers of buckwheat, you, tenders of sheep, you, lovers of women! Have done with following the plough and mucking up your yellow boots with mud; have done with running after women and wasting your knightly strength! The hour is come to win Cossack glory!"

And these words were as sparks falling on dry wood. The ploughman broke his plough, the wine-makers and beer-brewers threw away their vats and shattered their barrels, the craftsman and merchant sent their craft and shop to the devil and smashed the pots in their houses. And every man mounted his horse. In short, the Russian character displayed itself at its greatest and mightiest here.

Taras was one of the original, old colonels, born with a restless, fighting spirit and known for his blunt and straightforward manner. In those times, Polish influences had already begun to tell upon the Russian nobility. Many of the nobles were adopting Polish customs, introducing luxuries, magnificent suites, falcons, huntsmen, banquets, courts. This was not to Bulba's taste. He loved the simple life of the Cossacks, and fell out with those of his comrades who inclined towards the Warsaw party, calling them minions of the Polish lords. An indefatigable soul, he counted himself a rightful defender of the Orthodox faith. He would ride of his own accord into any village which complained of oppression by the leaseholders or of a fresh chimney tax, and, aided by his Cossacks, would execute justice. He laid down the rule that the sabre was to be drawn on three occasions—when the Polish tax-collectors did not pay due respect to the Cossack elders and stood with covered heads in their presence; when the Orthodox faith was abused or an ancestral custom violated; and lastly, when the foes were Mussulman or Turk, against whom he considered it justifiable under any circumstances to take up arms for the glory of Christendom.

Now he rejoiced beforehand at the thought of how he would turn up at the Setch with his sons and say, "See what fine young fellows I've brought you!" how he would introduce them to all his old, battle-tried comrades; how he would behold their first feats in the art of war and in carousing, which he counted among the principal knightly qualities. At first he had intended to send them by themselves, but the sight of their freshness, their tall stature, and their strong manly beauty inflamed his warlike spirit, and he resolved to ride with them himself on the morrow, although it was only his own stubborn will which had prompted the decision. He was already busy giving orders, choosing horses and trappings for his young sons, going into stables and storehouses, and picking the servants who were to accompany them the next day. He delegated his authority to Esaul Tovkach together with the strict injunction to lead the regiment to the Setch the moment he sent for it. He forgot nothing, although he was tipsy, the *horilka* fumes still lingering in his head. He even gave orders that the horses should be watered and their cribs filled with the best large-grained wheat. He was quite tired out by all this work when he returned.

"Well, children, we must sleep now, and tomorrow we shall do what God wills. Don't bother about beds, old wife; we will sleep in the open."

Night had just embraced the heavens, but Bulba always retired early. He threw himself down on a rug and covered himself with a long sheepskin coat, because the night air was rather fresh and because he liked to sleep warm when at home. He soon began to snore, and everyone in the yard followed his example; a medley of snores rose from the different corners where they lay; the first to fall asleep was the watchman, for he had drunk more than anyone else in honour of the young masters' home-coming.

The poor mother alone did not sleep. She bent over her sons' heads as they lay side by side; she combed their carelessly tangled curls and moistened them with her tears. She gazed at them with all her soul in her eyes, with all her senses, nay, with all her being turned into sight, and yet she could not gaze her fill. She had fed them at her own breast—she had cherished them—she had reared them—and now she was seeing them only for an instant! "My sons, my darling sons! what will become of you? what fate awaits you?" she moaned, and tears quivered in the wrinkles which had changed her once fair face. And, in truth, she was miserable, as was every woman in those fierce times. Only for a brief moment had she lived for love, only in the first heat of passion, in the first flush of youth; and then her stern charmer had forsaken her for his sabre, his comrades, and his carousing. She would see him but for two or three days after a year's absence and then would hear nothing of him for years. And what a life was hers when she did see him, when they lived together! She endured insults and even blows; the rare caresses that she saw were nought but charity. She was a strange creature amidst that community of wifeless knights upon whom free-living Zaporozhye had cast its grim colouring. Her joyless youth flitted by and her beautiful fresh cheeks and bosom lost their bloom, unkissed, and became faded and wrinkled before their time. All her love, all her feelings, everything that is tender and ardent in a woman, was turned into one feeling—a mother's love. She hovered over her children like the gull of the steppes, full of passion and pain. Her sons, her darling sons were being taken away from her, and, perhaps, she would never see them again! Who can say—perhaps the Tatar will cut off their heads in their very first battle, and she will not know where their forsaken bodies lie; perhaps they will be torn to pieces by vultures;

and yet for a single drop of their blood she would give all that was hers in the world. Sobbing, she gazed into their eyes, which all-powerful sleep was beginning to seal, and thought: "Ah, would that Bulba, when he wakes, put off their departure for a day or two; perhaps he has made up his mind to ride so soon from having drunk too much."

The moon shining high in the heavens had long since lighted up the whole yard, filled with sleeping Cossacks, the thick clump of willows and the tall weeds that drowned the palisade surrounding the yard. She still sat at her darling sons' heads, never taking her eyes off them for a moment, nor thinking of sleep. Already the horses, sensing the approach of dawn, had ceased champing and lay down upon the grass; the topmost leaves of the willows began to whisper, and little by little the whispering streamed down to the lowest branches. She sat there till daylight, not a whit weary and wishing in her heart that the night might last on and on. From the steppe came the ringing neigh of a colt; bright red streaks flashed across the sky.

Bulba suddenly awoke and sprang to his feet. He remembered quite well what orders he had given the night before.

"Now, my lads, you've slept enough! 'tis time! Water the horses! Where's the old wife ?" (So was he wont to call his spouse.) "Hurry, old wife, get us something to eat—a long road lies before us."

The poor old woman, her last hope gone, dragged herself sadly indoors. While she tearfully prepared everything for breakfast, Bulba gave his orders to one and all, bustled about in the stables, and himself chose the best trappings for his children. The collegians were suddenly transformed: instead of their muddy high-boots each was now shod in red morocco ones with silver-rimmed heels; the trousers, wide as the Black Sea, and with a thousand folds and pleats, were girded with a golden

cord; from this cord hung long thongs with tassels and other fingle-fangles pertaining to a pipe. Their *cossackins*, of a fiery-red cloth, were held tight at the waist by ornamented sashes, into which were thrust engraved Turkish pistols; sabres clanked at their heels. Their faces, scarcely sunburnt as yet, seemed handsomer and fairer; their youthful black moustaches set off the whiteness of their skin, rich with all the health and sturdiness of youth; they looked very handsome under their caps of black sheepskin with crowns of gold cloth. Poor mother! When she saw them she could not utter a word, and tears welled up in her eyes.

"Now, my sons, all is ready, let's not waste time!" said Bulba at last. "But first, as our Christian custom bids us, we must all sit down before our journey."

Everyone sat down, not excepting the serving men, who had been standing respectfully at the door.

"Now bless your children, mother!" said Bulba. "Pray God that they may fight bravely, that they might ever defend their knightly honour, and ever stand for the faith of Christ. And if not—may they perish and leave no trace on earth! Go up to your mother, children; a mother's prayer saves a man on land and sea."

The mother, weak as all mothers, embraced them, took two small icons, and hung them, sobbing, round their necks.

"May the Mother of God ... keep you.... Forget not your mother, my sons ... send me word of yourselves...." She could say no more.

"Well, children, let us go!" said Bulba.

The horses stood saddled at the door. Bulba sprang upon his Devil, who shied wildly aside as he felt on his back the tremendous weight of his rider, for Taras was remarkably heavy and stout.

When the mother saw that her sons had also mounted, she rushed towards the younger, whose features wore a softer

expression; she gripped his stirrup, clung to the saddle, and, with despair in her eyes, would not let him out of her hands. Two burly Cossacks gently picked her up and carried her into the hut. But when they had ridden through the gateway, she ran out after them, in spite of her years as swift as a wild goat, stopped the horse with incredible strength, and threw her arms round one of her sons with mad, uncontrollable passion. She was led away again. The young Cossacks rode on with heavy hearts, keeping back their tears for fear of their father, who was also somewhat shaken, although he strove not to show it. It was a bleak day, but there was a hard glint in the steppe grass, and the birds seemed to twitter all out of tune. Presently they looked back: their hamlet seemed to have sunk into the earth; they could see nothing above the ground but the two chimneys of their house and the tops of the trees whose branches they had once climbed like squirrels. And then only the distant field was to be seen—the field that brought to mind all the years of their lives, from the time when they had rolled in its dew-drenched grass to the time when each had waited there for a dark-browed Cossack lass, who timidly flew across it on quick young feet. And now only the solitary pole above the well with a cart-wheel fastened to its top stands etched against the sky; and the plain behind them looks from afar like a mountain hiding everything from view.

Farewell, childhood, farewell, games, and everything, and everyone, and all!

CHAPTER TWO

All three horsemen rode in silence. Old Taras was thinking of days long gone by: before him passed his youth, those bygone years—the years over which every Cossack weeps, for he would

like his whole life to be youth. He wondered whom of his old comrades-in-arms he would meet at the Setch. He reckoned up those who were dead and those he hoped were still alive. A tear dimmed his eye, and his grey head bent sadly.

His sons were thinking of other things. But first more should be said about them. At the age of twelve they had been sent to the Kiev Academy, for in those times all men of high standing deemed it their duty to give their sons an education—if only to have them forget afterwards everything they learned. At first, like all who entered the college, they were wild, brought up in lawlessness, but whilst there they acquired a certain polish, which, being common to all collegians, made them resemble one another. The elder, Ostap, began his career by running away the very first year. He was brought back, unmercifully flogged, and put to his books. Four times did he bury his primer in the ground, and four times was he given a brutal trouncing and a new primer. No doubt he would have buried the fifth, too, had not his father solemnly promised to put him into a monastery and keep him there for a full twenty years as a novice, and sworn in advance that he should never lay eyes on Zaporozhye unless he learned all the sciences taught in the Academy. It is an odd thing that the man who said this was the very same Taras Bulba who had ranted against all learning and advised his children, as we have seen, to give no thought to it at all. But from that time Ostap pored over his dull books with a rare assiduity and soon had the heels of the best collegians.

Education in those days was hopelessly at variance with the actual way of life; all the scholastic, grammatical, rhetorical, and logical subtleties were decidedly out of touch with the times and wholly without use in life. The students could not apply their knowledge, even the least scholastic, to anything whatever. The tutors themselves were even more incapable than the rest

by reason of their total divorcement from practice. At the same time the republican structure of the Academy, the fearful mass of hale and hearty young men, could not but lead the collegians to activities quite outside their curriculum. Ill-treatment, oft-repeated punishments by hunger, the many impulses that arise in a fresh and strong lad—all this led to the burgeoning of an enterprising spirit which afterwards flourished in Zaporozhye. The hungry collegians prowling the streets of Kiev were a constant menace to its citizens. The bazaar-women, when they caught sight of a passing collegian, always covered their pies, *bubliks*, and pumpkin seeds with their hands, in the manner an eagless protects her young. The *consul*, whose duty it was to keep an eye on his school-fellows, himself had such frightful trouser-pockets that he could have stowed in them the whole of a gaping bazaar-woman's stall.

These collegians formed an entirely separate world; they were not admitted to the higher circles, which were composed of Russian and Polish nobility. The voivode himself, Adam Kisel, though a patron of the Academy, ordered them to be kept out of society and under strict supervision. This last injunction, however, was quite superfluous, for neither the rector nor the monk-professors spared rod or whip; and often at their command the *lictors* flogged their *consuls* with such gusto that the latter scratched their trousers for weeks afterwards. To many this was a mere trifle and seemed but a little stronger than good vodka with a dash of pepper; others, at length, wearied of being dressed constantly with such poultices and fled to Zaporozhye—if they managed to find the road and were not caught on the way.

Ostap Bulba, although he applied himself assiduously to logic and even theology, did not escape the inexorable rod. Naturally, all this could not but harden his character and give

him that toughness which has always distinguished the Cossacks. Ostap was generally acknowledged as the best of comrades. He rarely led his fellows in such adventurous enterprises as raiding a private orchard or garden, but he was always among the first to join the colours of any enterprising collegian, and never, under any circumstance, did he betray his comrades. No rods or whips could make him do so. He frowned at any temptations save those of fighting and carousing; at least, he rarely if ever gave thought to anything else. He was single-hearted with his equals. He was kind—as kind as a man of his mettle could be in his time. He was genuinely moved by the tears of his poor mother, and that was the only thing that now saddened him and made him hang his head in thought.

The sentiments of his younger brother Andriy were somewhat livelier and maturer. He learned more willingly and without the effort usually required of a strong and heavy character. He was more inventive than his brother and more often the leader of rather hazardous enterprises; his ready wit sometimes helped him to escape chastisement, while his brother Ostap, despising subterfuges, threw off his coat and lay down on the floor, without ever thinking of begging for mercy. Andriy, too, burned with the thirst for heroic deeds, but his heart was open to other feelings as well. When he had passed his eighteenth year, a longing for love blazed up within him. Woman began to appear more often in his ardent dreams; while listening to philosophical debates, he would still see her—fresh, dark-eyed, gentle. Ever before him were her glimmering firm bosom, her beautiful soft arm, bare to the shoulder; the very gown that clung to her maidenly yet powerful limbs seemed inexpressibly voluptuous in his dreams. He carefully concealed these yearnings of his passionate young soul from his fellows, for in that age it was a shame and dishonour for a Cossack to think of woman and love

before he had gone to the wars. During his last years at the Academy he had rarely been leader of adventurous bands, but more frequently had wandered alone in the remote corners of Kiev, where low-roofed houses, buried in cherry orchards, peeped alluringly into the street. He had also ventured into the aristocratic quarter, which is now Old Kiev, where the Ukrainian and Polish nobles used to dwell and where the houses were built in a more fanciful style.

Once, as he stood there gaping, he was nearly run over by some Polish nobleman's coach, and the frightfully mustachioed driver, sitting on the box, gave him a well-aimed cut with his whip. The young collegian flew into a rage; with thoughtless daring he seized a hind wheel with his powerful hand and stopped the coach. The coachman, fearing a reprisal, laid his whip on his horses; they broke into a gallop, and Andriy, who had fortunately withdrawn his hand in time, fell face downwards in the mud. The sweetest and most musical of laughs resounded above him. He looked up and saw, standing at a window, a beautiful girl such as he had never beheld before—dark-eyed and white as snow, tinged with the rosy dawn. She was laughing with all her heart, and her laughter enhanced her dazzling beauty. He stood spell-bound. He stared at her in utter confusion, absently wiping the mud off his face, which only made it dirtier. Who was the beautiful girl? He sought to elicit that information from the servants, who, in rich liveries, stood at the gate in a crowd around a young *bandura*-player. But they laughed at the sight of his grimy face and deigned no reply. At length he learned that she was the daughter of the voivode of Kovno, who had come for a visit.

The following night, with an audacity peculiar to Kiev collegians, he squeezed through the palisade into the garden and climbed a tree whose branches spread to the very roof of the house;

from the tree he got on to the roof, and made his way down the chimney straight into the bedroom of the beautiful girl, who was at the moment sitting before a candlelight and removing her costly ear-rings from her ears. The beautiful girl was so alarmed on suddenly beholding a strange man that she was struck speechless; but when she perceived that the collegian stood with downcast eyes, too meek to move a finger, when she recognized in him the boy that had tumbled down in the street before her eyes, she was again seized with laughter. Moreover, Andriy's features were not at all frightening—he was very handsome. So she laughed with all her heart and amused herself at his expense for a long time. The beautiful girl was as flighty as all Polish girls; but her eyes—her wonderful, clear and piercing eyes—darted glances as long as constancy itself. The collegian stood stock-still, as though bound up in a sack, as the voivode's daughter boldly tripped up to him, put her sparkling diadem upon his head, hung her ear-rings on his lips, and draped him in a transparent muslin chemisette with gold-embroidered festoons. She dressed him up and played with him a thousand mischievous pranks, all with the childish abandon which marks the giddy Polish ladies, and which threw the poor collegian into still greater confusion. He cut a most ridiculous figure as he stood open-mouthed, staring into her dazzling eyes. A knock at the door startled her. She bade him crawl under the bed, and as soon as all quietened down, she called her waiting-maid, a captive Tatar, and ordered her to conduct him quietly to the garden and thence to see him over the palisade. But this time our collegian was not so fortunate in clearing the fence; the watchman, awakening, smote him over the legs, and the servants rushed out and belaboured him in the street for quite a long while until his swift legs took him to safety. After that it became very dangerous to pass the house, for the voivode's minions were

numerous. He saw her once more in a Polish Roman Catholic church; she noticed him and gave him a bewitching smile, as to an old familiar. He had another flitting glimpse of her, but shortly afterwards the voivode of Kovno departed, and, instead of the fair dark-eyed Pole, a fat ugly face looked out of her windows.

This was what Andriy now kept pondering over, with hanging head and eyes fixed on his horse's mane.

In the meantime the steppe had long since received them all in its green embrace, and the tall grass, rising around them, had hidden them, till only their black Cossack caps appeared above it.

"Hey, there! Why so quiet, my lads?" cried Bulba, waking at last from his own reflections. "You're as glum as monks! Cast all your thoughts to the devil! Take your pipes in your teeth, light up, and let us spur on our horses and fly faster than any bird!"

And the Cossacks, bending to their horses, disappeared in the grass. Not even their black caps are now to be seen, and only a streak of trampled grass marks their swift flight.

The sun had long since looked out in the clear heavens and bathed the steppe in its warm, quickening light. All that was dim and dreamy fled in a twinkling from the Cossacks' minds; their hearts fluttered within them like birds.

The farther the steppe unrolled, the more beautiful it became. At that time all the South, as far as the Black Sea, all the land which is now Novorossia, was but one green, virgin wilderness. No plough had ever touched those boundless waves of wild growth.

Horses alone trod down the tall grass, disappearing in it as in a forest. Nothing in Nature could be fairer. The earth's face looked like a green-gold ocean spouting millions of flowers. Through the tall, slender stems of the grass peeped blue, purple,

and lilac cornflowers; the yellow broom shot high its panicle; the umbellate caps of the white clover dotted the plain; an ear of wheat, brought God knows whence, was ripening in the thicket. Among the slim stalks partridges pecked about with outstretched necks. The air was filled with the voices of a thousand different birds. In the sky hawks hung motionless with outspread wings, their eyes fixed immovably on the grass below. The cry of a cloud of wild geese, wheeling on one side of the horizon, was echoed from God knows what distant lake. From the grass a gull rose with measured stroke and bathed luxuriously in the blue currents of air. Behold, now it vanishes in the heights till only a black speck is visible, now it turns on the wing and gleams for an instant in the sunlight. O steppes, how beautiful you are!

Our travellers would halt but a few minutes for dinner, when their escort of ten Cossacks alighted and untied the wooden casks of vodka and the pumpkins that served as cups. They ate only bread or wheaten biscuits with ham, drank but one cup apiece to fortify themselves, for Taras Bulba never allowed anyone to get tipsy on the road, and then they would resume their journey until evening. In the evening a great change came over the steppe. All its many-hued expanse caught the sun's last flaming reflection and darkened gradually, so that the dusk could be seen closing over it, painting it dark-green; the vapours thickened: every flower, every herb breathed forth its scent, and the whole steppe exhaled redolence. Broad bands of rosy gold, as if daubed on with a gigantic brush, stretched across the dark, blue-tinted welkin, here and there shreds of fluffy, transparent clouds gleamed whitely, and the freshest and most enchanting of breezes barely stirred the surface of the grass, gentle as sea waves, and softly touched the cheek. The music that had filled the day died away and gave place to another. The speckled gophers crept out of their holes, sat on their hind legs, and made the steppe resound

with their whistle. The chirp of the grasshoppers became louder. Ever and anon a swan's cry was wafted, ringing silvery in the air, from some secluded lake.

The travellers would halt in the open field and choose a spot for their night camp; then they would make a fire, hang a cauldron over it, and cook their gruel; the steam curled up in a slanting column. After supper the Cossacks turned their hobbled horses on to the grass and lay down to sleep, stretching themselves out on their cloaks. The stars looked down upon them. Their ears caught the teeming world of insects that filled the grass, their rasping, whistling, and chirping, which, magnified by the still air, rang clear and pure in the night and lulled the drowsy ear. If one of them happened to awake and arise, he saw the steppe spangled far and near with sparkling glow-worms. At times the night sky was illumined in spots by the distant glare of dry reeds burning on the meadows and river-banks, and then, dark flights of swans, winging their way northwards, were suddenly lighted up by a silvery-pink gleam, and it seemed as if red kerchiefs were flying in the dark heavens.

The travellers rode on without any adventure. Not a single tree did they pass; it was ever the same endless steppe, free and beautiful. At rare intervals only did they spy the bluish summits of the far-away forest which bordered the bank of the Dnieper. Once only did Taras point out to his sons a small dark speck in a distant field, saying, "Look, children, a Tatar rides yonder!" The little mustachioed face peered at them from afar with its small narrow eyes, sniffed the air hound-like, and vanished like an antelope, seeing the Cossacks were thirteen men. "Ho, lads! Would you overtake the Tatar? Better not try, you'd never catch him: his horse is swifter than my Devil." Yet, Bulba resorted to a subterfuge, fearing an ambuscade: they galloped to a small river, called the Tatarka, which flows into the Dnieper,

sprang into the water, horses and all, and swam a long way to hide their trail; then they rode out on the bank and resumed their road.

Three days later they were near their destination. The air suddenly grew cooler: they felt the Dnieper was nigh. Now it sparkled afar and parted from the horizon in a dark band. It breathed chilly waves into the air and stretched nearer and nearer, till at last it covered half the land. Here the Dnieper, after being hemmed in by the rapids, finally gains the upper hand, roaring like a sea and flowing far and wide; here the islands, flung into its midst, have forced it still farther out of its banks, and its waves, meeting neither crag nor hill, freely overflow the land. The Cossacks alighted from their horses, boarded a ferry-boat, and after a three hours' passage reached the shores of the island of Khortitsa, where the nomad Setch then lay.

A throng of people were squabbling on the shore with the ferrymen. Our Cossacks fastened the girths of their saddles. Taras assumed a dignified air, tightened his belt, and proudly stroked his moustache. His young sons, too, looked themselves over from head to heel, with a mingled feeling of vague anxiety and pleasurable anticipation. Then they all rode into a suburb that lay half a verst from the Setch. On entering it, they were deafened by fifty blacksmiths' hammers pounding in five-and-twenty smithies dug in the ground and thatched with turf. Strong-limbed curriers were squatting under porch-awnings in the street and kneading ox-hides with their sinewy hands. Tradesmen sat in their tents behind piles of flints and steels and gunpowder kegs. Here, an Armenian had hung out his costly kerchiefs; there, a Tatar was roasting spitted pieces of mutton rolled in dough. A Jew, his head thrust forward, was drawing *horilka* from a cask. But the first man they met was a Zaporozhian Cossack lying fast asleep in the very middle of the road, his

legs and arms flung far apart. Taras Bulba could not help stopping to admire him.

"Phew, what a famous sight!" he cried, pulling up. "Ah, what a splendid manly figure he makes!"

And, in truth, the picture was a brave one: the Cossack stretched full length, like a lion, on the road; his scalp-lock, proudly thrown back, covered a full foot of ground. His wide trousers were smeared with tar—to proclaim his utter disdain for the rich scarlet cloth of which they were made.

Having admired the Cossack to his heart's content, Bulba rode into a narrow street crowded with craftsmen busy at their trades and with people of all nationalities thronging this Setch suburb, which resembled a fair and which clothed and fed the Setch, for the latter knew only how to shoot and carouse.

At last they left the suburb behind them and saw a few scattered Cossack *kurens*, thatched with turf or, in Tatar fashion, with felt. Some were surrounded with cannon. Nowhere were there any fences or low-roofed houses with awnings propped by short wooden posts such as were seen in the suburb. A low stockaded rampart, totally unguarded, betokened a reckless lack of vigilance. A few sturdy Cossacks, who were lounging, pipe in mouth, in the middle of the road, glanced at them indifferently, but never bestirred themselves. Taras carefully picked his way among them with his sons, saying, "Good day, gentlemen!"—"And good day to you!" answered the Zaporozhians. The field was everywhere mottled with picturesque groups. Their swarthy faces bespoke them to be steeled in battle and tried in every sort of ordeal. So this was the Setch! Here was the lair of men proud and strong as lions! Hence poured freedom and Cossackdom over all the Ukraine!

The travellers rode into a great square, where the *Rada*, the general council of the Cossacks, usually assembled. A Zaporozhian

was sitting there on a large overturned barrel; he had taken off his shirt and was slowly sewing up the holes in it. They were once again checked by a band of musicians, in whose midst a young Zaporozhian was dancing, his arms outstretched, his cap tilted at a devil-may-care angle. He was yelling again and again, "Play faster, musicians! And you, Foma, don't grudge these Christians their *horilka*!" And Foma, a Cossack with a black eye, meted out a large jugful to everyone who presented himself. Round the young Zaporozhian four old ones were tripping about quite briskly, now leaping aside like a whirlwind, almost upon the musicians' heads, then suddenly going into a gay squatting dance, vigorously drumming the hard earth with their silver-rimmed heels. The ground hummed far about, and the air resounded with the *gopak* and *trepak* rhythms beaten out by the ringing hobnailed boots. But there was one who yelled more lustily and flew about more quickly than all the rest. His scalp-lock tossed about in the wind, his muscular chest was quite bare; he had on a warm winter sheepskin coat, and the sweat was pouring down his body in buckets.

"Throw off your coat!" cried Taras at length. "You're steaming!"

"I can't," the Zaporozhian yelled back.

"Why?"

"I can't! I'm made that way: what I cast off buys me my *horilka*!"

And indeed, the fine young lad had no cap, no sash on his *caftan*, no embroidered kerchief — all had gone the usual way.

The crowd was swelling; more people joined the dancers; and it was impossible for any onlooker not to be fired by the sight of the freest and wildest dance the world ever beheld, and which, from the name of its mighty inventors, is called the *kozachok*.

"Wish I weren't on horseback!" Taras exclaimed. "I'd join the dance myself!"

Among the throng, meanwhile, there began to appear staid old Cossacks, respected for their deeds by the whole Setch—grey scalp-locks, who had more than once been chosen elders. Taras soon spied a host of familiar faces. Ostap and Andriy heard nothing but: "Ah, it is you, Pecheritsa! Good day, Kozolup"—"Whence has God brought you, Taras?"—"How come you here, Doloto?"—"Hello, Kirdyug! Hello, Gusty! Never thought I'd see you again, Remen!" And forthwith Taras exchanged kisses with these heroes, assembled from the wild steppes of eastern Russia; and then began to ask questions: "And what of Kasyan? Where is Borodavka? What of Kolopyor? How fares Pidsytok?" But all the answers Taras heard were that Borodavka had been hanged in Tolopan, that Kolopyor had been flayed alive near Kizikirmen, that Pidsytok's head had been salted and sent in a keg to Constantinople. Old Bulba hung his head and murmured thoughtfully, "Ah, but they were good Cossacks!"

CHAPTER THREE

Taras Bulba and his sons had already spent about a week in the Setch. Ostap and Andriy occupied themselves but little with military training. The Setch did not like to trouble itself with military exercises and to waste its time on them; its youth was drilled and tempered by experience alone, in the heat of battles, of which, for that very reason, there was always enough. The Cossacks found it tiresome to fill up the intervals with the study of any warlike art, except perhaps marksmanship and, on rare occasions, horse-racing and wild-beast chasing in the meadows

and steppes; the rest of their time was spent in making merry—a sign of the untrammelled breadth of their souls.

The Setch presented an unusual scene, one of unbroken revelry, a festival noisily begun and with no end in sight. Some busied themselves with their crafts; others kept stalls and traded; but the greater part caroused from morning till night—if the wherewithal still jingled in their pockets and their loot had not yet passed into the hands of tradesmen and pot-house keepers. There was something exhilarating about this universal festival. It was no gathering of revellers drowning their sorrow in wine, but simply a riotous outburst of merry-making. Every man who came thither forgot and cast behind him all his troubles. He spat on all his past, in a manner of speaking, and plunged recklessly into free living in the company of men, who, roisterers like himself, had neither home nor family, nought but the open heavens and the eternal revel of their souls. This bred that fierce gaiety that could never have sprung from any other source. The tales and tattle that spread through the crowds of Cossacks lazily reposing on the ground were often so mirth-provoking and vivid that it took all a Zaporozhian's outward composure to keep a straight face, without even a twitch of the moustache—a striking feature which to this day distinguishes the Southern Russians from the rest of their brethren. Drunken, boisterous jollity it was; and yet it was no gloomy pot-house where a man loses himself in counterfeited hideous gaiety; here was a close-knit band of school-mates. The sole difference was that instead of following their tutor's pointer and listening to his fly-blown lessons, they would mount five thousand horses and go off on a raid; that instead of the field where they played ball, they had their recklessly unguarded frontiers where the swift Tatar showed his head and the green-turbaned Turk stared grimly. The difference was that instead of the coercive will which had brought them together at school,

they themselves had run away from their parental homes, had left their fathers and mothers; here were those who had already felt the noose tightening around their necks, and who, instead of that bloodless death, had seen life, and life in all its riotousness; here were those who, according to the noble custom, could never retain a single kopek in their pockets; here were those who had regarded a ducat as wealth, and whose pockets, thanks to the Jew revenue-farmers, could always be turned inside out without fear of dropping anything. Here were those collegians who had not been able to put up with the academic rod, and had not carried away a single letter of the alphabet from school. But besides them there were those here who knew about Horace, Cicero, and the Roman Republic. Here were many officers who later distinguished themselves under the colours of the King of Poland, and a great many seasoned partisans whose noble conviction it was that it mattered not where they fought so long as they did fight, as it did not behoove an honourable man to live without fighting. Many were here, too, who had come to the Setch merely to be able to say afterwards that they had been at the Setch and were already hardened knights. But who was not here? This strange republic was a child of the epoch. Lovers of war, golden goblets, rich brocades, ducats and pieces of eight could at all times find employment here. Those only who worshipped women could find nought to do here, for no woman dared show herself even in the suburb of the Setch.

To Ostap and Andriy it seemed exceedingly strange that a great crowd of people had entered the Setch with them and no one had asked them whence they came, who they were, and what were their names. They came thither as if returning to a home left only an hour before. The newcomer presented himself only to the *Koshevoi* ataman, who usually said:

"Welcome, good fellow! Do you believe in Christ?"

"I do," replied the newcomer.

"And do you believe in the Holy Trinity?"

"I do!"

"And do you go to church?"

"Yes."

"Let's see you cross yourself."

The newcomer made the sign of the cross.

"All right," said the *Koshevoi*. "Go and choose any *kuren* you like."

This ended the ceremony.

The whole Setch prayed in one church and was ready to defend it to the last drop of blood, although it would not even hear of fasting or temperance. Only the most covetous of Jews, Armenians, and Tatars dared to live and trade in the suburb, because the Zaporozhians never bargained and threw down as much money as their hand happened to take out of their pocket. But the fate of these grasping traders was miserable in the extreme. They were like the people who settled at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, for as soon as the Zaporozhians had squandered their money, these desperadoes smashed their stalls and took what they wanted gratis.

The Setch consisted of sixty and more *kurens*, each of which resembled a separate, independent republic, and bore an even greater resemblance to a boarding school. No one thought of starting a house or acquiring possessions. Everything was in the hands of the ataman of the *kuren*, who was consequently called *Batko* (Father); he had charge of funds and clothes, of all the food down to porridge and flour gruel, and even of the firewood. They gave him their money to take care of. Quite often the *kurens* quarrelled with one another. In such cases they at once passed from words to blows. The *kurens* covered the square and curried each other's carcasses until one of them gained the upper hand,

and then they all joined in a carouse. Such was the Setch, which had so many attractions for young men.

Ostap and Andriy threw themselves with all the ardour of youth into this ocean of revelry, promptly forgetting their father's house, the Academy, and all that had hitherto filled their minds, and gave themselves up to their new life. Everything here interested them—the riotous habits of the Setch, its simple administration and its laws, which at times seemed inordinately severe in so free a republic. A Cossack found guilty of theft, no matter how petty, was considered a disgrace to all Cossackdom; the ignoble wretch was tied to the "post of shame" and a club was laid beside him, with which every passer-by was bound to deal him a blow until in this manner he was clubbed to death. A Cossack who would not pay his debts was chained to a cannon, and there he remained till one of his comrades ransomed him by paying his debts. But nothing impressed Andriy so much as the terrible punishment decreed for murder. Before his very eyes a hole was dug, the murderer was thrown into it alive, and a coffin with the body of his victim was placed over him; and both were buried. For a long time afterwards Andriy was haunted by the memory of the horrible execution and the man buried alive together with the terrible coffin.

Soon both youths were in very good standing with the Cossacks. They often rode out into the steppe with comrades of their own *kuren*, or sometimes even with the whole *kuren* in full strength together with neighbouring *kurens*, to shoot an innumerable quantity of steppe birds of every sort, as well as deer and goats, or else they would go to lakes, rivers and river branches, assigned to every *kuren* by lot, cast their sweep-nets and land rich hauls to replenish their *kuren*'s food stock. Though there was nothing in all this to test them as Cossacks, they soon won distinction among the other youths by their daring and luck

in everything. They were bold and sure marksmen, and could swim across the Dnieper against the current—an exploit for which the novice was triumphantly admitted into Cossack circles.

But old Taras had in mind other exploits for them. His nature revolted at the idle life they were leading and thirsted for real action. He kept thinking how he could raise the Setch on a brave venture calling for knightly prowess. At length he went one day to the *Koshevoi* and asked him point-blank, "Well, *Koshevoi*, isn't it high time we Zaporozhians took the field?"

"There's nowhere to go," answered the *Koshevoi*, taking his short pipe from his mouth and spitting aside.

"Nowhere to go! We can go against the Tatars or against the Turks."

"We can't go either against the Turks or the Tatars," answered the *Koshevoi*, coolly putting his pipe into his mouth again.

"Why can't we?"

"We have promised peace to the Sultan."

"But he is an unbeliever; and God and Holy Writ command us to punish all unbelievers."

"We've no right to. If we had not sworn by our faith, we might have done it, but now—no, we can't."

"Why can't we? What do you mean by saying we have no right to? Here am I with two sons, both of them young men. Neither of them has been to war, and you say we've no right. Do you mean to say the Zaporozhians can't go to war?"

"Well, that's the way it must be."

"Must Cossack strength, then, be wasted in vain? Must a man die like a dog without having done any worthy deed, without any use to his country or Christendom? What, then, do we live for? Tell me, what the devil do we live for? You are a clever man; you weren't elected *Koshevoi* for nothing, so just tell me what we live for."

The *Koshevoi* made no reply to this question. He was an obstinate Cossack. He remained silent for a while, and then said, "All the same, there will be no war."

"There will be no war, you say?" Taras asked again.

"No."

"And it's no use thinking about it?"

"No use."

"Wait, you devil's son!" said Bulba to himself. "I'll show you!" And he forthwith resolved to take his revenge on the *Koshevoi.*

After having talked with a number of comrades, he treated them all to plenty of liquor, and soon the tipsy Cossacks made in a body for the square, where, tied to a post, stood the kettle-drum, which was generally used for summoning the *Rada.* Not finding the sticks, as the drummer always kept them on his person, they each seized a log of wood and began beating the drum. The first to respond to the drum-beat was the drummer himself, a tall man who managed to look frightfully sleepy-eyed although he had but one eye.

"Who dares beat the drum?" he shouted.

"Silence! Take your sticks and beat the drum when you are ordered," replied the tipsy elders.

The drummer, knowing only too well how such incidents ended, at once took from his pocket the sticks. The kettle-drum boomed, and soon the Zaporozhians came swarming up like black bumble-bees. They all assembled in a ring, and at length, after the third summons, the chiefs appeared: the *Koshevoi* with the mace, the token of his office; the judge with the army seal; the scrivener with his ink-horn; and the *esaul* with his staff. The *Koshevoi* and the other chiefs doffed their caps and bowed low on all sides to the Cossacks, who stood there proudly with their arms akimbo.

"What means this assembly ? What is your wish, gentlemen ?" asked the *Koshevoi.*

Shouts and curses silenced him.

"Put down the mace! Lay it down at once, devil's son! We don't want you any longer!" roared the Cossacks from the crowd. Some of the sober *kurens* seemed inclined to disagree; at length the *kurens,* sober and otherwise, came to blows. The yells and uproar became universal.

The *Koshevoi* tried to speak, but then thought better of it; knowing that the infuriated, self-willed crowd might beat him to death, as almost always happened on such occasions, he bowed very low, laid down the mace, and vanished in the crowd.

"Do you, gentlemen, command us to lay down the tokens of our rank, too ?" said the judge, the scrivener, and the *esaul,* making ready to resign ink-horn, army seal, and staff.

"No, carry on!" the crowd shouted. "We only wanted to give the *Koshevoi* the boot, because he's nothing but an old woman, and we need a man for *Koshevoi.*"

"Whom do you now choose as *Koshevoi* ?" the elders asked.

"Choose Kukubenko!" shouted one side.

"We don't want Kukubenko!" shouted the other. "He's too young; his mother's milk is still on his lips!"

"Let Shilo be the ataman!" shouted some. "Choose Shilo as *Koshevoi*!"

"Too much shilly-shally in Shilo!" the crowd yelled and swore. "What kind of Cossack is he when he is as thieving as a Tatar, the hound's son! To hell with the drunkard Shilo! Brain him with a shillalah!"

"Borodaty! Let's make Borodaty our *Koshevoi*!"

"We don't want Borodaty! A curse upon the bastard!"

"Shout for Kirdyug!" Taras Bulba whispered to some.

"Kirdyug! Kirdyug!" screamed the crowd.

"Borodaty! Borodaty!"

"Kirdyug! Kirdyug!"

"Shilo!"

"To the devil with Shilo!"

"Kirdyug!"

All the candidates instantly stepped out of the crowd as soon as they heard their names shouted, lest anyone should think they had personally influenced their election.

"Kirdyug! Kirdyug!" was heard ever louder.

"Borodaty!"

They began to settle the dispute by a violent display of fists, and Kirdyug triumphed.

"Go and fetch Kirdyug!"

About a dozen Cossacks detached from the crowd—some of them could scarcely manage to keep their feet, so overloaded they were with vodka—and marched directly to Kirdyug to tell him of his election.

Kirdyug, a rather old but clever Cossack, had been sitting in his *kuren* for quite a long time, as if he knew nothing of the ongoings.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Come; you have been chosen *Koshevoi*."

"Have mercy, gentlemen!" said Kirdyug. "I am the last man to be worthy of such an honour. A fine *Koshevoi* I should make! I have not sense enough for such a post. Could they not find a better man in the whole army?"

"Come on, I tell you!" the Zaporozhians shouted.

Two of them grasped him by the arms, and though he balked and jibbed, he was dragged to the square, goaded on by blows and kicks, swearing and exhortations: "Don't hang back, you devil's son! Take the honour, dog, when it is given to you."

In such a manner Kirdyug was conducted into the circle of Cossacks.

"Well, gentlemen," his escort bellowed to the crowd, "do you all agree to have this Cossack for your *Koshevoi*?"

"We agree!" roared the crowd; and the plain resounded long with the roar.

One of the chiefs took up the mace and offered it to the newly-elected *Koshevoi*. Kirdyug, as custom demanded, refused it. The chief offered it a second time. Kirdyug refused it again, and only after the third invitation did he take the mace. A yell of approval rose from the crowd, and it was re-echoed by the whole plain. Then from the midst of the crowd there stepped the four oldest Cossacks, white-whiskered and with white scalp-locks (no very old folk were to be found in the Setch, for no Zaporozhian ever died a natural death); each picked up a handful of earth—which recent rain had turned into mud—and placed it on Kirdyug's head. The mud trickled down his head to his moustache and cheeks, smearing his whole face. But Kirdyug stood unflinchingly and thanked the Cossacks for the honour they had done him.

So ended that noisy election; it remains unknown whether anyone rejoiced in its outcome as much as Bulba: he had taken his revenge on the former *Koshevoi*; moreover, Kirdyug was an old comrade of his, who had been with him in the same campaigns, over sea and land, sharing with him the toils and rigours of a soldier's life. The crowd at once scattered to celebrate the election, and a riot began such as Ostap and Andriy had never seen before. The pot-houses were ransacked; meads, *horilka*, and beer were carried off without payment; the keepers were glad to escape with their lives. The whole night through they shouted and sang martial songs. The rising moon gazed down on bands of musicians walking about the streets with *banduras*, tambourines, round balalaikas, and choristers who were kept in the Setch to chant

in church and to glorify the deeds of the Zaporozhians. At last, drink and fatigue began to get the better of these strong heads. Here and there a Cossack could be seen falling to the ground. Here a Cossack hugged a comrade until, growing maudlin and even bursting into tears, they both collapsed. There a whole group lay in a heap; there a man looked about for the best place to sleep and stretched himself out in a trough. The toughest Cossack of all still mumbled incoherently; finally even he, too, was overpowered by intoxication; he toppled down—and all the Setch slept.

CHAPTER FOUR

Next day Taras Bulba was already discussing with the new *Koshevoi* the best way of committing the Zaporozhians to action. The *Koshevoi*, a clever cunning Cossack, knew the Zaporozhians thoroughly, and began by saying, "We can't break our oath, not on any account." Then, after a pause, he added, "But there is a way; we will not break our oath, but we might think of something. Just have the people assemble, not at my order, but of their own free will. You know best how to manage that. And the chiefs and I will run to the square as if we knew nothing about it."

In less than an hour after their conversation the drums were rolling. The Cossacks, some tipsy and befuddled, assembled at once. A million Cossack caps were all at once bobbing in the square. A murmur arose, "Who...? What for...? Why this muster?" No one answered them. At length, in one quarter and in another, disgruntled voices were raised, "Our Cossack strength is being wasted: there is no war! The chiefs are grown lazy; their eyes are bloated with fat! There's no justice in the world!" The other Cossacks listened at first, and then themselves

began to complain, "Aye, in very truth, there is no justice in the world!" The chiefs professed astonishment at these words. At last the *Koshevoi* stepped forward and said, "Permit me, gentlemen Zaporozhians, to make a speech."

"Out with it!"

"The purport of my speech, most virtuous gentlemen, is to tell you ... but perchance you know it better than I do ... that many Zaporozhians have run into such debt to the Jew pot-houses and to their own brethren that no devil will give them any credit. Furthermore, the purport of my speech is to tell you that there are many young blades who have not the faintest idea of what war is like, whereas you know, gentlemen, that no young man can live without war. What manner of Zaporozhian is he if he never beat an infidel?"

"He speaks well," thought Bulba.

"But think not, gentlemen, that I speak thus to break the peace; God forbid! I merely state the facts. Besides, look at what sort of God's temple we have here; it's a disgrace to us: the Setch, by the mercy of God, has stood for years and years, but to this day, not to say anything of the outer appearance of our church, the images inside are without any trappings. No one has thought even of forging at least a silver frame for them! Our church has received but what some Cossacks have left it in their wills. Yea, and these gifts were poor, because the givers had drunk up nearly all their belongings in their lifetime. But the purport of my speech is not to tell you to make war against the infidels; we have promised the Sultan peace, and we should take a great sin upon our souls, for we have sworn by our faith."

"What is the meaning of all that trash?" Bulba wondered.

"So you see, gentlemen, that we can't begin war. Our knightly honour does not permit it. But my silly old head makes me think that we might send out our young men in boats, and let them

scrape the coasts of Anatolia a little. What do you say to that, gentlemen?"

"Lead us, lead us all!" shouted the crowd on all sides. "We are ready to lay down our heads for our faith!"

The *Koshevoi* was alarmed; he had not at all meant to raise the whole of Zaporozhye; he thought it unfair to violate the peace on this occasion.

"Permit me, gentlemen, to make another speech."

"Enough!" yelled the Zaporozhians. "Don't spoil the first one."

"If you will have it so, so let it be. I am but the slave of your will. Everyone knows, and the Holy Writ says so, that the voice of the people is the voice of God. No counsel is better than the counsel of the whole people. But I was thinking of this: you know, gentlemen, that the Sultan would not let the pleasant little adventure of our young blades go unpunished. And meanwhile we should be ready for him, and our forces should be fresh, and we should have no cause to fear anyone. Besides, the Tatars may come down on the Setch when we are away; those Turkish dogs will never dare to come while the master is at home; but they will bite our heels from behind, and bite painfully, too. If the whole truth must be told, we have not enough boats in store, nor has there been ground enough gunpowder, for all to set out. As for myself, I'm for it, for I am but the slave of your will."

The cunning ataman fell silent. The crowd broke up into groups and began to discuss the matter; the *kuren* atamans put their heads together. Luckily, few were pot-valiant, and so it was resolved to follow the prudent advice.

A number of men were at once dispatched to the opposite bank of the Dnieper, where the army treasure and part of the arms captured from the enemy lay concealed in hiding-places

under water and among the reeds. All the others rushed to the boats, to inspect and prepare them for the expedition. In a twinkling the whole shore was covered with people. Carpenters appeared, axe in hand. Sunburnt, broad-shouldered, sturdy-legged elderly Zaporozhians, with black and greying moustaches, stood knee-deep in the water, their trousers rolled up, and pulled at the stout ropes, dragging the boats into the water. Others were hauling dry logs and newly-felled trees. Here they were planking a boat; there a boat, turned bottom upwards, was being caulked and tarred; there long bundles of reeds were being fastened to the boats, after the Cossack fashion, that they might not be washed over by the sea waves; all along the shore fires were built and tar was being boiled in copper cauldrons for tarring the boats. The old and experienced instructed the young. The noise and shouts of work arose on all sides; the shore itself seemed to come alive with the stir and movement.

Just then a large ferry-boat was nearing the shore. The crowd of people in it had already at a distance begun to wave their hands. They were Cossacks in ragged, miserable garments—some, indeed, had on nothing but their shirts and a short pipe in their mouths—which showed that they had either just escaped from some disaster or had feasted away all they had off their backs. From among them came forward a short, thickset, broad-shouldered Cossack of about fifty. He yelled louder and waved his hand more vigorously than any; but his words were drowned by the noise and shouts of the workmen.

"What tidings do you bring?" asked the *Koshevoi*, when the ferry made fast at the shore.

All the workmen, pausing in their labours with raised axe and chisel, looked on in expectation.

"Evil tidings!" shouted the thickset Cossack from the ferry-boat.

"What are they?"

"Do you permit me, gentlemen Zaporozhians, to make a speech?"

"Speak out!"

"Or perchance you will call a *Rada*?"

"Speak, we are all here." The people crowded together.

"Have you not heard of the ongoings in the hetmanship?"

"And what is going on there?" asked one of the *kuren* atamans.

"Eh! What! It seems the Tatars have wadded up your ears that you heard nothing."

"Well, tell us what is doing there."

"Such things are doing there as no born and baptized man has ever seen before."

"Tell us what's doing there, you son of a dog!" yelled one of the crowd, losing patience.

"Such times are come upon us that even our holy churches are not our own."

"How not our own?"

"They have been leased to the Jews. If the Jew is not paid in advance, there can be no service."

"The man must be raving!"

"And if the damned dog of a Jew does not put his mark on our holy Easter-bread with his unclean hand, it cannot be consecrated."

"He lies, gentlemen brothers! It cannot be that an unclean Jew puts his mark upon the holy Easter-bread!"

"Listen! That's not all. Roman priests are riding about all over the Ukraine in gigs. But the trouble lies not in the gigs; the trouble is that they harness not horses any longer, but Orthodox Christians. Listen! That's not all: they say that the Jewesses are already making themselves petticoats out of our

priests' vestments. That, gentlemen, is what is doing in the Ukraine! And you sit here in Zaporozhye carousing, and the Tatars, it seems, have so frightened you that you have no eyes, no ears, no anything, and you know nothing of what is doing in the world."

"Wait, wait!" broke in the *Koshevoi*, who up till then had stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground like all Zaporozhians, who in a grave situation never yielded to their first impulse, but kept their own counsel and quietly worked up themselves to the pitch of indignation. "Wait! Tell me this: what were *you* doing—may your fathers be drawn and quartered by the devil—what were you doing yourselves? Had you no swords? How came you to permit such lawlessness?"

"How came we? Would you have stopped them when there were fifty thousand Poles and when—it's no use to conceal our sins!—there were dogs among our own folk who have already accepted their faith?"

"And your hetman and colonels—where were they?"

"God preserve us from the fate of our colonels!"

"How so?"

"Our hetman now lies roasted in a copper cauldron in Warsaw; and the heads and hands of our colonels are being carted from fair to fair for all the people to see. Such is the fate of our colonels!"

The whole crowd came to life. At first a hush fell over the shore, as before a fierce storm; then all at once voices were raised and all the shore burst into speech.

"What! Jews renting Christian churches! Roman priests harnessing Orthodox Christians to their gigs! What! To permit such torments to be suffered on Russian soil because of the accursed Papists! To let them so treat our colonels and our hetman! Nay, this must not, this shall not be!"

Such words ran through every part of the crowd.

The Zaporozhians gave vent to their fury; they became conscious of their strength. It was no longer the excitement of a light-minded people; this was the excitement of strong and firm characters, which, though not easily fired, burned long and stubbornly.

"Hang all Jewry!" a cry sounded in the crowd. "Teach them not to make petticoats for their Jewesses out of priests' vestments! Teach them not to put their mark upon our holy Easter-bread! Drown all the heathens in the Dnieper!"

These words, spoken by someone in the crowd, flashed lightning-like through all minds, and the throng rushed to the suburb, bent on putting all the Jews to death.

The poor sons of Israel, losing what little courage they had, hid themselves in empty *horilka* barrels, in ovens, and even crept under the petticoats of their women; but the Cossacks found them wherever they were.

"Most illustrious gentlemen!" shrieked one Jew, tall and thin as a pole, thrusting his terror-smitten, sorry visage from amidst a group of his fellows. "Most illustrious gentlemen! Let me speak a word, one little word! We will tell you something you have never heard before, something so important that it is impossible to say how important it is!"

"All right, let them speak," said Bulba, who was always willing to hear what the accused had to say for himself.

"Illustrious gentlemen!" cried the Jew. "Such gentlemen were never before seen—by heavens, never! Such kind, good and brave men were never before in the world!" His voice shook and faltered with fear. "How could we so much as think ill of the Zaporozhians? They are not our folk at all, those leaseholders in the Ukraine! By heavens, they're not! They are not Jews at all; the devil alone knows what they are! They are only

fit to be spat upon and dropped. Everyone here will say the same. Is it not true, Schloma? Is it not so, Schmul?"

"By heavens, it is true!" replied Schloma and Schmul from among the crowd, both in ragged skull-caps and pale as pipe-clay.

"We have never yet had truck with your enemies," went on the lanky Jew. "And as for the Catholics, we do not even wish to know them—may the devil give them no sleep! We and the Zaporozhians are as brothers—"

"What! The Zaporozhians are your brothers?" shouted one of the crowd. "That will never be, you damned Jews! Into the Dnieper with them, gentlemen! Drown them all, the heathens!"

These words were the signal. They laid hold of the Jews and began to throw them into the waves. Pitiful screams sounded on all sides, but the grim Zaporozhians only laughed to see the Jews' legs, shoes and stockings and all, cleave the air. The unhappy orator, who had called down disaster on his own head, sprang out of his coat, by which he had already been seized, and remaining in his tight pied waistcoat, clasped Bulba's legs and wailed in a piteous voice, "Great lord, most illustrious gentleman! I knew your brother, the late Dorosh! He was an ornament to all knighthood. I gave him eight hundred sequins, when he had to be ransomed as a captive of the Turks."

"You knew my brother?" asked Taras.

"By heavens, I did! He was a generous gentleman."

"And what is your name?"

"Yankel."

"Very well," said Taras; then, after a few moments' thought, he turned to the Cossacks and spoke thus, "There will always be time to hang the Jew, when we want to; but now let me have him."

With these words, Taras took him to his string of waggons, beside which stood his Cossacks. "Well, get under the waggon, lie down, and don't move. And you, brothers, see that he stays there."

So saying, he went to the square, where the crowd had started gathering long since. Everyone had at once left the shore and the boats, for now it was to be not a sea expedition, but a land campaign, so that they needed horses and waggons, not ships and skiffs. Young and old, all now wanted to take part in the campaign; all resolved, on the advice of the elders, the *kuren* atamans, and the *Koshevoi*, and by the unanimous assent of all the Zaporozhian army, to march straight into Poland, avenge the injury and disgrace to their faith and to Cossack glory; to loot every town, set fire to the villages and the fields; and to spread their fame far and wide over the steppe. All at once girded and armed themselves. The *Koshevoi* seemed to grow a whole head taller. He was no longer the meek executor of a lawless people's giddy whims, but their absolute lord. He was a despot, who knew but to command. All these self-willed and pleasure-seeking knights stood arrayed in orderly ranks, with heads bowed respectfully, not daring to raise their eyes, while the *Koshevoi* gave his orders; he gave them quietly, without any noise or haste, weighing his words as became an old and seasoned Cossack veteran, who had led many a cleverly planned enterprise.

"Look carefully, look carefully to everything," so he spoke. "Look to your waggons and your tar-pails, and test your weapons. Do not take too much clothing with you: a shirt and two pairs of trousers each, and a pot of flour gruel and another of ground millet—let no man take any more. There will be plenty of everything in the waggons. Every Cossack should have two horses. And we must have about two hundred yoke of oxen, for we shall need them for the fords and bogs. Above all, gentle-

men, keep order. There are some among you, I know, who, when God puts booty in their way, fall to tearing up nankeen and costly velvet for foot-wraps. Renounce that devilish habit; drop the petticoats and take only weapons, if they be good ones, and *chervontsi* and silver, for they are capacious things and are certain to come in handy. And this I tell you beforehand that if anyone gets drunk upon the road, he will have a short shrift. I will have him tied by the neck, like a dog, to a waggon, whoever he be, were he even the army's most valiant Cossack. I will have him shot on the spot like a dog and left without burial to be torn by the vultures, for a drunkard on the march does not deserve Christian burial. You, young men, must obey your elders in all things. If you are nipped by a bullet or scratched by a sword—head or any other part—think little of it. Just mix a charge of gunpowder in a cup of vodka, swallow it at a draught, and all will be well—neither will you have any fever; and on the wound, if it be not too large, simply put some earth, mixing it first with spittle in the palm of the hand, and the wound will dry up. Well, now to business, lads, and let there be no needless hurry, and do everything well!"

So spoke the *Koshevoi*; and no sooner had he finished his speech than all the Cossacks set about their business. All the Setch had at once grown sober; nowhere was a single drunken man to be found, as though there never had been any topers among the Cossacks.

Some repaired the wheels and changed the axles of the waggons; others loaded them with sacks of provisions and with arms; still others drove in the horses and oxen. On all sides was heard the thud of horses' hoofs; the test firing of guns; the rattle of swords; the lowing of oxen; the creaking of waggons driven out on to the road; the voices and ringing shouts of the Cossacks; the urging-on of the drivers. Presently the Cossack cavalcade

stretched out across the plain; and he who would run from its van to its rear would have a long run before him.

In the small wooden church the priest held a farewell service, and sprinkled one and all with holy water; all kissed the cross. When the cavalcade set out and was leaving the Setch, all the Zaporozhians turned their heads back.

"Farewell, our mother!" they said almost in one breath. "May God preserve you from all misfortune!"

As he rode through the suburb, Taras Bulba saw that his wretched Jew, Yankel, had already set up a stall with an awning and was selling flints, turn-screws, powder, and every sort of provision needed by the soldier on the road—even rolls and loaves. "What a devil that Jew is!" thought Taras, and riding up to him on his horse, he said, "Fool, why are you sitting here? Do you want to be shot like a sparrow?"

To this Yankel replied by going up closer to him; making a sign with both hands as though about to disclose a secret, he said:

"Let my lord but keep silence and say nought to anyone. My own waggon is among the Cossack waggons; I bring every needful provision for the Cossacks, and on the road I will furnish everything at a cheaper price than any Jew ever sold at before. By heavens, I will! by heavens!"

Taras Bulba shrugged his shoulders and rejoined the cavalcade, marvelling at the businesslike nature of the Jew.

CHAPTER FIVE

Soon all south-western Poland became a prey to fear. Everywhere the rumour had passed, "The Zaporozhians! The Zaporozhians are coming!" All who could save themselves by flight,

fled. All rose and scattered after the manner of that orderless, careless age, when neither fortresses nor castles were erected, but man knocked together a makeshift straw hut, thinking, "What is the use of spending money and labour on a good house, when a Tatar raid will raze it anyway!" All were on the run: one exchanged his plough and oxen for a horse and gun and joined his regiment; another went into hiding, driving off his cattle and carrying away all that could be carried. Some rose up in arms to meet the strangers and perished in battle; but the majority fled before them. All knew that it was hard to fight the violent and warlike horde known by the name of the Zaporozhian army, which under a self-willed, disorderly exterior concealed an order exceedingly well-fitted for warfare. The mounted Cossacks took care not to overburden or heat their horses; the rest walked soberly behind their waggons; the whole force moved only by night, spending the day in wild, uninhabited fields and in forests, of which at that time there was plenty. Spies and scouts were sent ahead to ascertain the where, what, and how of the enemy. And often the Zaporozhians suddenly turned up where they were least expected, leaving nothing but death in their wake. They set fire to the villages; the cattle and horses were either driven off by the army or slaughtered on the spot. It was more like a bloody feast than a military expedition. One's hair would stand on end today at the sight of that horrible trail of atrocities—a sight common enough in that half-savage age—left by the Zaporozhians wherever they set foot. Murdered children, women's breasts cut away, the skin torn from the legs of those who were set free—yea, the Cossacks were paying their debts in full.

The abbot of one monastery, hearing of their approach, sent two monks to the Cossacks to tell them that they were misbehaving; that the Zaporozhians and the government were at

peace; that they were not only violating their duty to their king, but common law as well.

"Tell the bishop from me and from all the Zaporozhians," said the *Koshevoi*, "that he has nothing to fear. The Cossacks are merely making fire to light their pipes."

And soon after, the magnificent abbey was hugged by a devastating blaze, and its great Gothic windows looked grimly through the surging billows of fire.

Crowds of refugees—monks, Jews, and women—filled to overflowing those towns whose garrisons and militia could be hoped to offer them protection. At times the government belatedly sent help in the form of a few troops; but these either failed to find the Zaporozhians or were seized with panic and turned tail at the first encounter, fleeing on their swift horses. It happened that quite a few of the king's captains, who had won glory in former battles, resolved to unite their forces and make a firm stand against the Zaporozhians.

Then it was that our young Cossacks—despising pillage, looting, and a feeble foe, but burning with the desire to show their worth to their seniors—really put their prowess to the test by entering into single combat with the dashing and boastful Pole, who cut a splendid figure on his proud steed, the loose sleeves of his cloak streaming in the wind. Learning the art of war was like a game to the young Cossacks. They had already won a great many horse-trappings and valuable sabres and muskets. In a month these nestlings had become fully fledged; they had become men. Their features, which hitherto had worn a youthful softness, were now grim and strong. Old Taras was overjoyed to see both his sons take their place among the foremost. Ostap seemed born to tread the path of war, to scale the summits of its difficult art. Never faltering or flinching under any circumstances, with a coolness

almost unnatural in a man of two-and-twenty years, he could instantly measure the perils of any impasse and at once devise a way of escaping it, only that he might the more surely triumph in the end. His every action was now marked by the assurance born of experience, and in all he did was clearly to be seen the promise of a future leader. His body breathed forth strength; his knightly qualities had already burgeoned into mighty and leonine qualities.

"Ah, but he will make a good colonel yet," old Taras would say. "Yea, he will even outshine his own *Batko*."

The music of blades and bullets held Andriy in its spell. He knew not what it is to consider, calculate, or gauge beforehand his own and his adversary's strength. He was blinded by the fierce joy and ecstasy of battle; to him there was something festal in those moments when a man's brain is on fire—when everything whirls and swims before his eyes—when heads fly—when horses crash down, and he gallops, like a man drunk with wine, amidst the whistling of balls and the flashing of sabres, and cuts right and left, and never feels the blows showering on himself. Many were the times when his father marvelled, too, at Andriy, seeing him fling himself, driven on by sheer love of battle, into dangers a cool and sensible man would never have risked and, by the sheer audacity of his mad onslaught, perform such wonders as could not but amaze warriors grown old in battle. Old Taras marvelled at him, and said, "He, too, is a good soldier—God preserve him! Not as good as Ostap, but still a good soldier!"

The army resolved to march straight on the town of Dubno, where, rumour had it, there were rich coffers and wealthy townsfolk. In a day and a half the march was accomplished, and the Zaporozhians appeared before the city. The inhabitants were determined to defend themselves to the last, and to die

in the squares and streets, and on their thresholds, rather than let the enemy into their houses. High earthen ramparts surrounded the town; where they were low there projected a stone wall, or a house serving as a redoubt, or at least an oaken stockade. The garrison was strong and aware of the importance of its duty. The Zaporozhians tried to storm the ramparts but were met by a hail of grape-shot. The burghers and townsfolk evidently did not wish to remain idle, for they stood in a crowd on the ramparts. Their eyes promised desperate resistance. The women likewise had decided to bear a hand in the defence, and upon the heads of the Zaporozhians rained stones, barrels, pots, and hot pitch, and sackfuls of sand which blinded them. The Zaporozhians disliked having to deal with fortresses: sieges were not their field.

The *Koshevoi* ordered them to fall back and said, "Never mind, gentlemen brothers, we will retreat. But may I be a heathen Tatar, and not a Christian, if we let any one of them out of the town. Let the dogs all perish of hunger!"

The army retreated, invested the town, and, for lack of anything better to do, busied itself with laying waste the surrounding country, burning the neighbouring villages and ricks of wheat in the fields and turning herds of horses to graze in the cornfields, as yet untouched by the sickle, where nodded, as if in mockery, the heavy ears of wheat, the fruit of a wondrous rich harvest which that season was the generous reward of all farmers. The town was terror-struck to see their means of subsistence destroyed. Meanwhile the Zaporozhians, having strung out their waggons in a double ring around the town, camped as in the Setch in *kurens*, sucked their pipes, exchanged prize weapons, played at leapfrog and odd-and-even, and glanced with killing calm at the town. Watch-fires were lighted at night. In every *kuren* the cooks boiled gruel in huge copper

cauldrons. Alert sentinels stood beside the fires, which burnt all night.

But the Zaporozhians soon began to tire of inactivity and of protracted sobriety unaccompanied by any fighting. The *Koshevoi* even ordered the wine allowance to be doubled, which was sometimes done in the army when there were no hard feats or marches on hand. This life was not to the liking of the young Cossacks, especially the sons of Taras Bulba. Andriy was plainly bored.

"You hothead!" said Taras to him. "Bear all, Cossack, and ye'll be ataman yet! Not he is a good warrior who does not lose heart in the fiercest battle, but he who can stand even idleness, who endures all and has his own way whatever the odds."

But fiery youth and old age never agree. The two are of different natures, and they look with different eyes at one and the same thing.

In the meantime Bulba's regiment, led by Tovkach, caught up with the army; with him were two more *esauls*, the scrivener, and the other regimental officers. In all, the Cossacks mustered four thousand strong. Among them were a good many mounted men, who had risen of their own free will, without any summons, as soon as they heard what was afoot.

To each of Bulba's sons the *esauls* brought their old mother's blessing and a cypress icon from the Mezhigorsk Monastery in Kiev. Both brothers hung the holy images round their necks, and despite themselves grew pensive at the thought of their old mother. What did her blessing mean, what did it forebode? Was it a blessing for their victory over the enemy, and then for a happy return to the land of their fathers, with booty and glory, ever to be sung by the *bandura*-players? Or was it . . . ? But the future is unknown, and it stands before man

like the autumn mist that rises over the marsh; birds fly blindly up and down in it, flapping their wings and never seeing each other—the hawk seeing not the dove, nor the dove the hawk—and none ever knowing how far he may be flying from his death....

Ostap had long since returned to his duties and gone to the *kurens*. But Andriy, though he knew not why, felt a stifling weight at his heart. Already the Cossacks had finished their supper; evening had long since faded; the beautiful July night had filled the air; still he did not go to the *kurens*, nor lie down to sleep, captivated by the picture before him. Numberless stars twinkled, clear-cut and sharp, in the sky. The field was strewn far and wide with waggons, loaded with various goods and provisions captured from the enemy, with dripping tar-buckets hanging under them. All about the waggons Zaporozhians were to be seen, sprawling on the grass. They slept in picturesque attitudes, their heads resting on a sack, or a cap, or simply on a comrade's side. Sword, match-lock, short-stemmed pipe with brass mountings, wire brushes and flint-box were inseparable from every Cossack. The heavy bullocks lay like huge whitish masses, their feet turned under them, resembling grey boulders scattered on the slopes of the field. On all sides the sonorous snoring of the sleeping host had already begun to arise, and was answered from the field by the ringing neigh of the stallions, indignant at having their feet hobbled. Meanwhile the beauty of the July night had acquired a magnificent and awesome quality. It was the glare of the neighbouring districts which had not yet burned to the ground. In one place the flame spread slowly and majestically over the heaven; in another, meeting with something inflammable and bursting into a whirlwind, it hissed and flew upwards to the very stars, and its severed tongues died in the highest regions of the sky. Here

stood the charred, black monastery, like a stern Carthusian monk, displaying its gloomy grandeur at every new outburst of flame; there blazed the monastery garden. One could almost hear the trees hissing as they were wrapped up in smoke; and as the fire broke through, it suddenly lighted up clusters of ripe plums with a hot, phosphorescent, violet gleam, or turned the yellow pears here and there to pure gold; and in the midst of all this, hanging against the wall of the building or from a bough, would be seen the black figure of some poor Jew or monk whom the fire was devouring together with the building. Birds, hovering far away above the conflagration, looked like a mass of tiny black crosses upon a fiery field. The beleaguered town seemed to be slumbering. Its spires, roofs, stockade, and walls flickered quietly in the glare of the distant conflagrations.

Andriy walked round the rows of Cossack waggons. The watch-fires were about to die out at any moment, and the sentries themselves were fast asleep, having stuffed themselves with true Cossack appetite. Somewhat surprised at such carelessness, he thought, "It is well that there is no strong foe at hand, no one to fear." At last, he went to one of the waggons, climbed into it, and lay down upon his back, folding his hands under his head; but he could not sleep and gazed long at the sky. It was all open before him; the air was pure and limpid. The thicket of stars forming the Milky Way and girding the heavens was flooded with light. From time to time Andriy fell into a drowse; a light mist of slumber veiled the sky before him for a spell; then it cleared and again became visible.

It was at such a moment that a strange human face seemed to flit before his eyes. Thinking it to be but an illusion of sleep which would at once vanish, he opened his eyes wider and saw that a withered, emaciated face was actually bent over

him, its eyes looking into his. Long coal-black hair, unkempt, dishevelled, hung from beneath a dark veil thrown over the head. The strange glint in the eyes and the deathlike swarthiness of the sharp-featured face could surely belong to none but a phantom. Involuntarily he reached for his arquebus and asked almost convulsively, "Who are you? If an evil spirit, be gone; if human and alive, your jest is ill-timed. Go, or I will kill you with one shot."

In answer to this, the spectre put its finger on its lips and seemed to entreat silence. He lowered his hand and looked at the apparition more closely. From the long hair, the neck, and the half-naked bosom he recognized it to be a woman. But she was not a native of these parts. Her wasted face was swarthy; her wide cheek-bones protruded sharply over her shrunken cheeks; her bow-shaped narrow eyes arched upwards. The more he scrutinized her features, the more he found them familiar. At length he burst out impatiently with the question, "Tell me, who are you? It seems to me that I have known or seen you somewhere."

"Two years ago in Kiev."

"Two years ago ... in Kiev..." Andriy repeated, trying to call to mind every memory of his former life at the Academy. He gave her one more intent look and suddenly exclaimed aloud, "You are the Tatar woman—the servant of the lady, the voivode's daughter!"

"Hush!" whispered the Tatar, clasping her hands imploringly, trembling all over, and turning her head round to see whether anyone had been roused by Andriy's loud cry.

"Tell me—tell me—wherefore—why are you here?" said Andriy in a breathless whisper broken by inward emotion. "Where is your lady? Is she alive and well?"

"She is here, in the town."

"In the town?" he almost shouted again, feeling all his blood rush at once to his heart. "Why is she in the town?"

"Because the old lord himself is in the town. He has been voivode of Dubno for the last year and a half."

"And is she married? Speak! How strange you are! How fares she now?"

"She has not eaten for two days."

"How is that?"

"None of the townsfolk has had a crust of bread for a long time; all have long had nothing but earth to eat."

Andriy was dumbfounded.

"My lady saw you among the Zaporozhians from the town wall. She said to me, 'Go, tell the knight to come to me, if he remembers me; and if he does not, let him give you a piece of bread for my old mother, for I will not see my mother die before my eyes. Better that I should die first, and she afterwards. Beseech him; cling to his knees. He, too, has an old mother; he must give us bread for her sake!'"

Many conflicting feelings kindled and burned in the young Cossack's breast.

"But how are you here? How did you come?"

"By the underground passage."

"Is there an underground passage?"

"There is."

"Where?"

"You will not betray me, knight?"

"I swear it by the Holy Cross!"

"Go, then, down yonder ravine and across the brook where the rushes grow."

"It leads straight into the town?"

"Straight into the town monastery."

"Let us go at once!"

"But first, in the name of Christ and the Holy Mary—a piece of bread!"

"Good; you shall have it. Stand here by the waggon, or, better still, lie down in it; nobody will see you—all are asleep. I'll be back directly."

And he went to the waggons where the provisions of his *kuren* were stored. His heart beat violently. All the past, all that had been pushed into the background by the rigours of his present Cossack life, now rushed at once to the surface and drowned the present in its turn. Again that proud woman rose before him, as from the dark depths of the sea. Once more there gleamed in his memory her beautiful arms, her eyes, her laughing lips, her thick dark nut-brown hair, falling in curls upon her breasts, and all her supple, maidenly body created in such perfect harmony. No, all this had never faded, had never died out in his heart; it had but given room for a time to other powerful emotions; but often, ah, how often had they disturbed the young Cossack's deep slumber! And often had he awakened and lain sleepless, without knowing why.

As he walked on his heart beat faster and faster and his knees trembled at the mere thought of seeing her again. When he reached the waggons, he had quite forgotten what he had come for; he raised his hand to his brow and rubbed it long, trying to recollect his errand. Then, he shuddered with fear from head to foot, struck with the thought that she was dying of hunger. He darted to one of the waggons and took several large loaves of brown bread under his arm; but immediately it occurred to him that such fare, though welcome to the plain taste of a robust Zaporozhian, would be too coarse and unfit for her tender constitution. Then he recalled that, the day before, the *Koshevoi* had rated the cooks for using up all the buckwheat flour to make one supper, when there was enough

for three meals. Sure of finding plenty of gruel left in the cauldrons, he took his father's gruel pot and went with it to the cook of his *kuren*, who was sleeping beside two ten-pail cauldrons, with the coals still glowing under them. Peering into the cauldrons, he was astonished to find both of them empty. It must have taken superhuman effort to eat it all; the more so as their *kuren* numbered fewer men than the others. He looked into the cauldrons of the other *kurens*—nothing there, either. He could not but recall the proverb, "Zaporozhians are like babes: when there's little, they'll eat it; when there's much, they'll leave nothing."

What was to be done? There was, however, somewhere in a waggon of his father's regiment, a sack of wheaten bread, which was found when the bakery of the monastery was pillaged. He went straight up to his father's waggon, but the sack was not there: Ostap had put it under his head; he lay stretched out on the ground, making the whole field resound with his snoring. Andriy seized the sack with one hand and jerked it aside so sharply that Ostap's head dropped on the ground; he started up in his sleep, and sitting there with eyes closed, yelled at the top of his lungs, "Hold him, hold the Polish devil! And catch the horse! catch it!"

"Be quiet, or I'll kill you!" shouted Andriy in terror, swinging the sack at him. There was no need to do so, for Ostap broke off his speech, fell back, and gave such a snore that the grass around him trembled. Andriy looked cautiously about him to see whether Ostap's sleepy ravings had waked any of the Cossacks. One long-locked head rose in the nearest *kuren*; it rolled its eyes and soon dropped back on the ground. After waiting two or three minutes, he set out with his burden. The Tatar woman lay there hardly daring to breathe.

"Come, get up. Everyone is sleeping; do not be afraid. Could you carry one of these loaves if I cannot take them all?" With

these words he slung the sack on to his back, pulled out another, full of millet, from a waggon on his way, even taking in his hands the loaves he had wanted the Tatar to carry, and, stooping somewhat under his load, he struck out boldly through the rows of sleeping Zaporozhians.

"Andriy!" called old Bulba, as they were passing him.

His heart stood still. He stopped and, shaking from head to foot, said faintly, "What is it?"

"There is a woman with you! Ay, I'll curry your hide for you when I get up! Women will lead you to no good!" So saying, he leaned his head upon his elbow and glared at the veiled form of the Tatar.

Andriy stood there, more dead than alive, not daring to look in his father's face. And when he did raise his eyes and look at him, he saw that old Bulba was asleep, his head resting in the palm of his hand. He crossed himself. His fear rushed from his heart still faster than it had assailed it. When he turned to look at the Tatar, she stood before him, heavily veiled, like a dark granite statue, and the glare of the distant conflagration lighted up only her eyes, glazed as the eyes of a corpse. He tugged at her sleeve, and both went on, looking back at every step, until at last they climbed down the slope of a deep hollow or ravine, along the bottom of which a brook snaked lazily, overgrown with sedge and studded with tufts of sod.

Once they reached the bottom of the ravine, they were well out of sight of the Zaporozhian camp. At least, as Andriy glanced back, he saw the bank loom behind him in a steep wall. On its crest waved a few stalks of steppe grass, over which the moon rose like a tilted sickle of bright pure gold. The light breeze blowing from the steppe was a warning that little time remained till the dawn. But no distant crow of the cock was heard, for

neither in the town nor in the devastated neighbourhood had a cock been left for a long time past. They crossed the brook over a small log; the opposite bank appeared higher and rose more steeply. It seemed that this was a strong and naturally defended point of the town fortress, for the earthen ramparts here were lower, and no part of the garrison was seen behind it; yet farther on towered the thick wall of a monastery. The sheer bank was covered with a growth of rank weeds, and in the narrow strip of ravine between the bank and the brook grew reeds almost as tall as a man. On the summit of the bluff there could be seen the remains of a wattled fence, which had once enclosed a garden. In front of it grew wide leaves of the burdock; behind rose the goose-foot, the thistle, and the sunflower, which reared its head above the others. Here the Tatar shook off her slippers and went barefoot, carefully gathering up her skirts, for the spot was swampy and covered with water. Having made their way through the reeds, they stopped before a heap of brushwood and fascines. Pushing the brushwood aside, they revealed a sort of earthen arch—an opening not much wider than the mouth of a baker's oven. The Tatar, bending her head, went in first. Andriy followed, bending as low as he could, so as to pass with his sacks; and both soon found themselves in total darkness.

CHAPTER SIX

Andriy slowly groped his way through the dark and narrow earthen tunnel, following the Tatar and carrying his sacks of bread.

"Soon we shall see our way," said his guide, "we are coming to the place where I left my lamp."

True enough, a faint light gradually lighted up the dark

earthy walls. They reached a small open space, evidently used as a chapel; at any rate, a narrow table, like an altar, stood near the wall, and above it was an almost entirely defaced image of the Catholic Madonna. A small silver icon-lamp hanging before it threw a faint light on the picture. The Tatar stooped and picked up the lamp she had left there on the ground; it was made of copper, with a tall, slender stem, and with snuffers, a pin for trimming the wick, and an extinguisher hanging from it on chains. She raised it and lighted it at the icon-lamp. The light grew brighter, and they went on, one after the other, now illumined by its blaze, now swallowed up by the coal-black murk, as in the paintings of Gerardo *della notte.*

The knight's fresh and handsome face, glowing with health and youth, made a striking contrast with the pallid and emaciated face of his companion. The passage had become wider, so that Andriy could straighten himself. He looked with curiosity at the earthen walls, which reminded him of the catacombs of Kiev. Here, as in the Kiev catacombs, there were niches in the walls with coffins standing in some, while in others lay human bones, grown mouldy with the damp and crumbling into powder. Here, too, holy men had evidently sought refuge from the world, from its storms, sorrows, and temptations. In places it was very dank; sometimes there was water under their feet. Andriy was often obliged to halt to let his companion rest, as her fatigue made itself felt at almost every step. A morsel of bread she had swallowed had only caused pain in her stomach, and she frequently had to stand motionless for a few minutes before she was able to move.

At last a small iron door appeared before them. "Thank God! We are here," said the Tatar in a weak voice and lifted her hand to knock—but her strength failed her. Andriy, in her stead, gave a strong knock on the door. There was a hollow

echo, which was a sign that beyond the door lay a wide-open space. The echo changed its tone as if thrown back by high vaults. In a minute or two, keys jingled, and someone seemed to be descending a flight of stairs. At length the door opened; they were met by a monk, who stood on a narrow stairway, with a bunch of keys and a candle in his hands. Despite himself, Andriy recoiled at the sight of a Catholic monk, who aroused such hatred and contempt among the Cossacks that they treated his brethren even more inhumanly than they did the Jews. The monk also started back when he saw a Zaporozhian Cossack, but a muffled whisper from the Tatar reassured him. He lighted them up the stairs, locked the door, and took them to the stairhead until they found themselves beneath the dark and lofty arches of the monastery church. Before one of the altars, with tall candlesticks and candles, a priest kneeled, praying in a soft voice. On either side of him, also kneeling, were two young choristers, clad in purple mantles and white lace surplices, holding censers in their hands. He was praying for a divine miracle—that the town might be saved, that their fortitude might be strengthened, that patience might be sent them, that the tempter might be confused who inspired timidity in their souls and induced them to mutter against earthly misfortunes. A few women, ghostlike, were on their knees, supporting themselves by and even drooping their heads in utter exhaustion on the backs of the chairs and on the dark wooden benches before them; a few men also knelt mournfully, leaning against the columns and pilasters which upheld the side arches. A stained-glass window over the altar was lighted by the rosy hue of morning, and pale-blue, yellow, and crimson patches of light fell from it down on the floor, illumining the dim church. The whole altar, in its distant recess, suddenly stood out in a bright glow; the cloud of smoke from the censers was tinted with all the colours

of the rainbow. From his dark corner Andriy gazed, not without surprise, at the wonders wrought by the light. At that moment the majestic roar of the organ suddenly filled the whole church. It grew deeper and more sonorous, rising and swelling into heavy rolls of thunder; and then, all at once, it turned into sublime music, and its singing notes soared high among the arches, sweet as the voices of virgins; then once more it fell into a deep roar and thunder, and was silent. But the thunderous echoes long after cascaded vibrantly among the arches; and Andriy, his mouth half open, marvelled at the majestic music.

Just then he felt a tug at the skirt of his *caftan*.

"It is time!" said the Tatar.

They went across the church, unnoticed by anyone, and came out into the square outside. The blush of dawn had long since touched the sky; all heralded the rising sun. The square, strictly quadratic, was empty; in the middle still remained some wooden stalls, showing that, perhaps, only a week before a market of victuals had been here. The street, unpaved as all others of its time, was simply a hump of dried mud. The square was surrounded by small one-storeyed houses of stone or clay, their walls displaying from top to bottom their latticed timber frames. Such half-timber houses were common in the towns of the day, and may even now be seen in certain parts of Lithuania and Poland. They were all covered with inordinately high roofs, with a great many dormer-windows and air-holes. On one side, almost next to the church, rose a taller building quite distinct from the others—probably the town hall or a governmental establishment. It was two storeys high, and above it, on two arches, towered a belvedere, where a sentinel was standing; a large clock-face was built into the roof.

The square seemed dead; but Andriy thought he heard a faint moan. Looking about him, he saw at the opposite end

two or three people lying motionless on the ground. He strained his eyes to see whether they were asleep or dead; and at that same moment he stumbled against something lying at his feet. It was the dead body of a woman—apparently a Jewess. She must have been still young, though her wasted and distorted features did not show it. On her head was a red silk kerchief; a double row of pearls or beads adorned her earcaps; two or three long locks fell in ringlets from beneath them on her shrivelled neck with its tightly strung veins. By her side lay a child, whose hand clutched convulsively at her lank breast and, finding no milk there, twisted it with its fingers in vain anger. It was no longer crying or screaming, and only the gentle heaving of its stomach showed that it had not yet drawn its last breath. They turned into a street and were suddenly stopped by a madman, who, seeing Andriy's priceless burden, sprang upon him like a tiger and clawed at him, shrieking, "Bread!" But his strength was unequal to his madness; Andriy pushed him back, and he crumpled up on the ground. Moved with compassion, Andriy threw him a loaf, which he seized and began to bite and tear like a mad dog; and soon, on that very spot in the street, having too long taken no food, he expired in horrible convulsions. Almost at every step they were startled by the ghastly toll of famine. It appeared that many, unable to endure their torments in their homes, had run out into the street, as if hoping by a miracle to find succour in fresh air. At the gate of one house sat an old woman, and it was impossible to tell whether she was asleep, dead, or swooning; at least, she no longer heard or saw anything, and sat still, her head sunk on her breast. From the roof of another house, there hung on a rope a stiff, shrunken corpse. The poor wretch could not endure the sufferings of hunger to the last and had chosen rather to hasten his end by deliberately taking his own life.

At the sight of these startling proofs of famine, Andriy could not help asking the Tatar:

"Couldn't they really find anything to prolong life with? When men are driven to extremity, well, there's nothing to be done but to feed on what they had till then been squeamish about; they may feed upon creatures forbidden by law—anything might then be used for food."

"All has been eaten," answered the Tatar, "all the animals. Not a horse, nor a dog, nor even a mouse is to be found in the whole town. We never stored any provisions in the town: everything was brought from the villages."

"But how, then, dying such a fearful death, can you still think of holding the town?"

"Ay, the voivode might have given up, but yestermorning the colonel—the one in Budzhak—sent a hawk into the town with a note forbidding its surrender, and saying that he was coming to its rescue and was only waiting for another colonel that they might set out together. Now they are expected every minute.... Well, and here we are at the house at last."

Andriy had already noticed from a distance a house unlike the others, apparently built by an Italian architect; it was constructed of beautiful thin brick, and had two storeys. The bay windows of the lower storey were encompassed in lofty granite cornices; the upper storey consisted of a series of small arches, forming an arcade; between them were lattices with coats of arms; the corners of the building were likewise adorned. A broad staircase, of painted bricks, came down into the square. At its foot sat two sentinels, who in a picturesque and symmetrical manner held with one hand their halberds and with the other supported their drooping heads, looking more like statues than human beings. They neither slept nor dreamed, but, it seemed, were insensible to everything around them: they paid not the

slightest attention to those who went upstairs. At the head of the stairs, they found a richly clad warrior, armed from head to foot, who was holding a prayer-book in his hand. He raised his weary eyes on them, but the Tatar spoke a word to him, and he dropped them again upon the open pages of his prayer-book. They entered the first chamber, quite a large one, which served either as a reception-room or an ante-room. It was filled with soldiers, lackeys, huntsmen, cup-bearers, and other retainers—indispensable to the dignity of any Polish magnate, whether of martial rank or from among the landed grandees—sitting along the walls in various postures. There was the reek of a snuffed candle; two other candles in a pair of huge candelabra, nearly as tall as a man, standing in the middle of the room, were still burning, although morning had long since peeped in through the broad grated window.

Andriy stepped straight towards a wide oaken door, escutcheoned and lavishly carved; but the Tatar plucked at his sleeve and pointed to a small door in a side wall. Through this they gained a passage, and then a chamber, which he began to examine curiously. A streak of light which filtered through a chink in the shutters picked out a crimson curtain, a gilded cornice, and a painting on the wall. Here the Tatar gestured to Andriy to wait and opened the door into another room, from which flashed a ray of candlelight. He heard a whispering and a soft voice which made him quiver inside. Through the half-open door he caught a glimpse of a graceful female figure, with a long luxuriant braid of hair falling upon an upraised arm. The Tatar returned and bade him enter. He had no memory of how he entered and how the door was closed behind him.

Two candles were burning in the room; a lamp flickered before an image; beneath stood a tall table with steps to kneel upon while praying. But he had no eyes for these things. He turned

away and saw a woman; she seemed to have been frozen or turned to stone in the midst of impulsive movement. It seemed as if her whole body had been suddenly checked in the act of springing towards him. And he, too, stood amazed before her. He had not thought to find her such as she was: she was not the same, not the girl he had formerly known; nothing about her was the same; twice as fair and enchanting she was now than she had been. Then, there had been something unfinished, incomplete about her; now, she was like a masterpiece after the final stroke of the artist's brush. She had been a giddy but charming girl; and now she was a woman in the flower of beauty. Her uplifted eyes shone with matured feeling—not hints of feeling, but feeling in all its fullness. The tears were not yet dry in them and filmed them with a lustrous moisture that struck straight to the soul. Her bosom, neck, and shoulders had reached the measure of fully-developed beauty; her hair, which formerly had waved in light curls round her face, had now become a thick, luxuriant mass, part of which was braided and pinned to her head, while the rest fell over her bosom in loose and lovely curls, and reached down to her finger-tips. It seemed that her every feature had changed. In vain did he try to discover a single trait of those which had haunted his memory—not one did he recognize! Great as her pallor was, it did not mar her wondrous beauty, but rather added to it something impetuous, irresistible, and victorious. Andriy's heart was awed, and he stood spell-bound before her. She, too, seemed surprised at the appearance of the Cossack, who stood before her in all the beauty and power of youthful manhood; who even with his mighty limbs immovable betrayed an easy and careless freedom of movement; his firm glance shone with a clear sparkle; his velvety brows curved in a bold arch; his sunburnt cheeks glowed with the brightness of fiery youth; his young black moustache was as glossy as silk.

"No, I lack the power to thank you, generous knight," said she, her silvery voice shaking. "God alone can reward you; it is not for me, a weak woman—"

She cast down her eyes; her lids fell over them in snowy semicircles, fringed with long arrowlike lashes. Her lovely face bowed forward, and a delicate blush spread over it. Words failed Andriy. He longed to unburden his heart to her—to say all as ardently as it burned in his heart—but could not. He felt something stop his tongue; his words were soundless; he felt that it was not for him, bred at the Academy and in a warlike, migratory life, to respond to words like these—and he cursed his Cossack nature.

At that moment the Tatar slipped into the room. She had already cut into slices the bread brought by the knight, carrying it in on a golden plate, which she set before her lady. The beautiful girl glanced at her, at the bread, and then raised her eyes to Andriy. In those eyes there was a world of feeling. Their eloquent look, telling of her sufferings and of her inability to express her emotions, Andriy understood better than any words. All at once his heart grew light; everything within him seemed to have been set free. The feelings and impulses of his soul, which till then a mysterious hand had held on a tight leash, as it were, were now released, at large, and eager to flow forth in an untamable torrent of words. But the beautiful girl turned of a sudden to the Tatar and asked anxiously, "And my mother? Have you taken some to her?"

"She is asleep."

"And to my father?"

"Yes. He said that he would come himself to thank the knight."

The girl took a slice of bread and raised it to her lips. With inexpressible delight Andriy watched her break it with her pearly fingers and eat it—and suddenly he recalled the man who, mad

with hunger, had expired before his eyes from swallowing a piece of bread. He paled, and seized her hand, crying, "Enough! eat no more! You have not eaten for so long that the bread is poison to you now!" And she let her hand fall directly and, like an obedient child, looked into his eyes. If only words could express—but no: neither chisel, nor brush, nor the loftiest and mightiest speech has the power of expressing what may be seen in the eyes of a maiden, or the emotion of him who looks into such eyes.

"O queen!" cried Andriy, his heart and soul, his whole being, brimming over with emotion. "What need you? what will you? Command me! Set me the most impossible task in the world—I will do it even if I have to die to do it! Yes, that I will! And to die for you—I swear by the Holy Cross—will be so sweet—nay, I cannot say how sweet! Three hamlets are mine, the half of my father's droves of horses, all that my mother brought my father, even what she conceals from him—all is mine! No Cossack has arms like mine; the hilt of my sabre alone would buy me the best drove and three thousand sheep. And all this will I renounce, throw away, burn, drown at one word from you, at a move of your fine black brow! I know that my speech, perhaps, is foolish, ill-timed, out of place; that it is not for me, after my life at the Academy and among the Zaporozhians, to speak in the manner of kings, princes, and the flower of noble knighthood. I can see that you are a creature of God unlike us all, and far below you are all the other wives and maiden daughters of gentility. We are not fit to be your slaves; only the angels in heaven are worthy of serving you."

With growing amazement, all ears, not letting fall a single word, the maiden listened to the impassioned speech, which, as a mirror, reflected a young and powerful spirit. Each simple word of this speech, spoken in a voice flying straight from the

bottom of his heart, rang with power. She raised her lovely face towards him, threw back her troublesome tresses, and gazed long at him with parted lips. Then she was about to speak; but she checked herself suddenly as she recalled that the young man was a Zaporozhian, that his father, his brethren and country stood behind him, stern avengers; that terrible were the Zaporozhians besieging the town; that a cruel death awaited all within. And her eyes were suddenly full of tears; she seized a silk-embroidered kerchief and pressed it to her face, and in an instant it was all wet. Long did she sit there with her beautiful head thrown back and her snow-white teeth set on her beautiful underlip—as if she had suddenly felt the sting of a venomous reptile—with the kerchief on her face lest he should see her racking grief.

"Speak but one word to me!" said Andriy and took her soft hand. A sparkling fire ran through his veins at the touch, and he pressed the hand lying without feeling in his.

But she kept silent, never taking the kerchief from her face and remaining motionless.

"But why are you so sad? Tell me, why are you so sad?"

She flung away her kerchief, brushed aside the long hair from her eyes, and broke into sorrowful speech, uttering the words in a low, quiet tone. Thus the breeze, rising on a beautiful evening, wanders through the thick growth of the water-rushes, and soft, melancholy sounds rustle, whisper, and tinkle forth; and the wayfarer, lingering in inexplicable sadness, strains his ears to hear them, and heeds not the dying evening, nor the gayly floating songs of the villagers returning home from their harvest labours in the fields, nor the distant rumble of the passing cart.

"Am I not worthy of everlasting pity? Is not the mother who bore me unhappy? Is not my lot a bitter one? Art thou

not my merciless tormentor, O my cruel fate? Thou hast brought all to my feet: the highest nobles, the wealthiest lords, counts, and foreign barons, all the flower of our knighthood! All loved me, and any one of them would have counted my love a great boon. I had but to wave my hand, and any one of them—the first in beauty and birth—would have been my mate. And with none of them didst thou bewitch my heart, O my cruel fate; but thou didst bewitch it, not with any of the best warriors of our land, but with a stranger, with our foe. For what sin, O most holy Mother of God! for what heavy crimes dost thou so relentlessly, so ruthlessly chastise me? My days were passed in affluency and superfluity; the richest viands and sweet wines were mine. And what was it all for? To what end? That I might die a cruel death which even the meanest beggar in the kingdom is spared? It is not enough that I should be doomed to this horrible fate; not enough that before my end I should behold my father and mother, for whom I would willingly give my life twenty times over, die in intolerable torment. All this is not enough, but I must before my end hear words and see love such as I have never before dreamed of. My heart must be rent to pieces with his speech—my bitter lot must be made still bitterer—I must bewail my young life still more piteously —my death must seem even more terrible—and, dying, I must reproach thee, my cruel fate, and thee—forgive my sin!—most holy Mother of God!"

As she fell silent, a look of utter hopelessness and despair came upon her face; its every feature betokened gnawing grief, and all, from the sadly bowed brow and downcast eyes to the tears which rolled and dried on her softly glowing cheeks— all seemed to say, "There is no happiness in this spirit!"

"Such a thing was never heard of!" cried Andriy. "It cannot be, it shall not be that the best and most beautiful of women

suffer so bitter a fate, when she was born that all that is best in the world might bow before her as before a holy being. No, you shall not die! It is not for you to die! By my birth and by all that I love in the world I swear you shall not die! But if it should happen, if nothing—neither strength, nor prayer, nor courage—can turn away this cruel fate, then we will die together; and I will die first, I will die before you, at your lovely feet, and death alone will part us."

"Deceive not yourself and me, Sir Knight," she said, gently shaking her beautiful head. "I know, and to my great sorrow I know but too well that you may not love me; I know your duty and your faith. Your father and comrades and country call you, whilst we are your enemies."

"And what are my father, comrades, and country to me!" said Andriy with a quick toss of his head, drawing himself up, as straight as a poplar on the river-bank. "If it comes to that—I wish to know nothing and no one! No one!" he repeated in the same voice and with that gesture which in the brawny, dauntless Cossack announces his determination to do an unheard-of deed impossible to another. "Who says the Ukraine is my country? Who gave it to me for my country? Our country is what our soul longs for, what is dearest of all. You—yes, you are my country! That country will I carry in my heart, will bear it there as long as I live. I defy any Cossack to tear it thence! And for that country I will barter, give up, and destroy everything!"

Turned for a space to stone, like a beautiful statue, she gazed into his eyes, and suddenly burst into tears; and then, with that wonderful feminine impetuosity of which none is capable but an uncalculatingly generous woman born for the finest impulses of the heart, she flung herself on his neck, clasped him with her wondrous snowy arms, and sobbed aloud.

At that moment muffled cries, together with the sound of trumpets and kettle-drums, were heard in the street. But he heard them not. He only felt how her beauteous lips bathed him with the sweet warmth of their breath, how her tears streamed over his face, and how her fragrant hair, falling unbound from her head, wrapped him in its dark and glossy silk.

Just then the Tatar ran in with a cry of joy. "Saved! saved!" she cried, beside herself. "Our troops have come into the town; they have brought grain, millet, flour—and captive Zaporozhians."

But neither of the two heard whose troops had entered the town, what they had brought with them, or who were the captured Zaporozhians. Filled with feelings as are not enjoyed in this world, Andriy kissed the sweet lips that touched his cheek; and the lips were not unresponsive: they returned the caress. And in that mutual kiss each of them felt that which is given to a mortal but once in a lifetime.

And the Cossack was lost! lost to all Cossack knighthood! Never again will he see Zaporozhye—his father's hamlets—the church of his God! The Ukraine, too, will never again see the bravest of her children who undertook to defend her. Old Taras will tear from his scalp-lock a tuft of his grey hair and curse the day and the hour when he begot a son to shame him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Noise and commotion filled the Zaporozhian camp. At first, no one could understand how the troops had entered the town. Then it was discovered that the Pereyaslav *kuren*, encamped by the side gates of the town, had been dead drunk; it was therefore not at all surprising that half had been killed and the other half bound, before either realized what was afoot. While

the neighbouring *kurens*, awakened by the noise, were seizing their weapons, the troops had already passed through the gates, and their rear ranks beat back with their fire the sleepy and half-sober Zaporozhians who rushed after them in disorder. The *Koshevoi* ordered all to assemble; and when all stood in a ring and had fallen silent, their heads uncovered, he said:

"You see, gentlemen brothers, what has happened this night. You see what drunkenness has led to! You see how the enemy has shamed us. That's the kind of people you are: if your vodka allowance is doubled, you go on swilling till the foes of Christian warriors not only pull your breeches off you, but even sneeze in your faces without your knowing it!"

The Cossacks all stood with their heads hanging, conscious of their guilt. Only Kukubenko, the ataman of the Nezamai *kuren*, made reply.

"Wait, *Batko*!" said he. "Although it's against the law to retort when the *Koshevoi* speaks before the whole army, yet the matter was not as you say, and therefore I shall speak. You've not been quite fair in blaming this Christian army. The Cossacks would have been guilty and deserving of death had they got drunk on the march, in action, or during some hard, arduous task. But we've been sitting idle, loitering round the town. No fast, nor any other Christian exercise; how, then, could a man help getting drunk in idleness? There is no sin in that. Let us now show them that they can't fall upon innocent folk. We've beaten them well before, and now we'll beat them so that they won't get away with their lives."

The speech of the *kuren* ataman pleased the Cossacks. They raised their heads, which had been drooping lower and lower, and many nodded approvingly, exclaiming, "Kukubenko has spoken well!"

And Taras Bulba, who was standing not far from the *Koshevoi*, said, "How now, *Koshevoi*? Kukubenko seems to have spoken the truth, eh? What do you say to that?"

"What do I say? I say that it is a happy father that has begot such a son! It needs no great wisdom to utter words of reproach, but great wisdom it needs to utter such words as do not embitter a man in distress, but encourage and embolden him, as spurs embolden a horse refreshed by water. I was myself going to say a word of cheer to you, but Kukubenko has thought quicker of it."

"The *Koshevoi* has also spoken well!" rang through the ranks of the Zaporozhians. "Well said!" joined others. And the greyest of them nodded their heads, shook their silvery mustachios, and softly said, "Well spoken!"

"Now listen, gentlemen!" went on the *Koshevoi*. "To seize the fortress—may the devil take it!—by scaling or undermining it, as the Germans do, is not a fitting business for a Cossack. But judging by everything, the foe has entered the town without much provisions; he hadn't many waggons with him. The people in the town are hungry; they will gobble everything up at once; as for their horses—I don't know what they'll do about hay, unless some saint of theirs drops it down from heaven on to their hay-forks; God alone can tell, and their priests are only glib with their tongues.... For one thing or another, they are sure to come out of the town. So do you break up into three parties and saddle the three roads before the three gates: five *kurens* before the main gate and three *kurens* before each of the others. The Dyadkiv and Korsun *kurens* will lie in ambush. Colonel Taras will also go into ambush with his regiment. The Titarevka and Timoshevka *kurens* will make up the reserve and stand on the right flank of the baggage-train, and the Shcherbinov and the Upper Steblikiv *kurens* on the left. And let those dare-devils who have the sharpest tongues come forward and

tease the foe! The Poles are empty-headed by nature: they will not stand your jeers, and perhaps even today they will sally forth out of the gates. The *kuren* atamans must all look to their *kurens*; whoever hasn't his ranks full will fill them up with the remains of the Pereyaslav *kuren*. Look to everything. Give a loaf of bread and a cupful of vodka to one and all to clear their brains. But surely everyone must still be full up with yesterday's food, for, to tell the truth, you stuffed yourselves so that I wonder none of you burst during the night. And here is one order more: if any Jewish pot-house keeper sells a Cossack so much as a single cup of vodka, I'll have a pig's ear nailed to his forehead and hang him up by his feet. Now then, to work, brothers! to work!"

Thus ordered the *Koshevoi*; and all bowed to him from the waist and, their heads still uncovered, set out for their waggons and their camps; it was only when they had gone quite a long way that they covered themselves. All began to make ready: they tested their sabres and broadswords, poured powder from the sacks into their powder-horns, drew back and arranged the waggons, and selected the horses.

All the way to his regiment Taras wondered what had become of Andriy: had he been captured with the others and bound before he was awake? But no, Andriy was not the man to be taken prisoner alive. Still, he was not to be seen among the slain Cossacks. Taras was so lost in thought as he strode at the head of his regiment that it was a long time before he heard someone calling him by his name.

"Who wants me?" he said, recovering at last.

Before him stood Yankel the Jew.

"Sir Colonel! Sir Colonel!" cried the Jew in a hurried, broken voice, as though wishing to reveal a matter of no small importance. "I have been in the town, Sir Colonel!"

Taras stared at him, marvelling how the Jew could have succeeded in getting in and out of the town.

"What devil took you there?"

"I'll tell you this minute," said Yankel. "As soon as I heard all that noise at daybreak, when the Cossacks began to fire, I snatched up my *caftan* and ran there at top speed without stopping to put it on. I slipped into the sleeves already on the way, because I wanted to find out as soon as I could what the noise was about and why the Cossacks had begun firing at daybreak. So I ran up to the very town gates, just as the last of the troops was entering the town. And there before his troop was Cornet Galendowicz. He's a gentleman I know: these three years past he has owed me a hundred *chervontsi*. I ran after him as though to claim a debt, and so got into the town with them."

"How so? You entered the town and wanted to claim a debt?" said Bulba. "And he didn't order you to be hanged like a dog on the spot?"

"By heavens, he did want to hang me!" the Jew replied. "His retainers had already caught hold of me and thrown a noose around my neck, but I begged the gentleman to spare my life, and said I would wait for the debt as long as ever he liked, and promised to lend him more, if he'd help me to collect my debts from the other knights. For that Sir Cornet—I'll tell you all—has not a single *chervonets* in his pocket; although he has hamlets and manors and four castles and steppe-land stretching well nigh up to Sckłow, he has no more money than a Cossack—not a farthing! Even now, if the Breslaw Jews hadn't equipped him, he'd have nothing to go to the war with. That was why he couldn't go to the Diet—"

"What, then, did you do in the town? Did you see any of our men?"

"Certainly! There are many of our men there: Isaac and Rahoom and Samuel and Haivaloh and the Jew leaseholder—"

"The devil with the dogs!" shouted Taras in a burst of anger. "What do I care for your Jewish brood! I'm asking you about our Zaporozhians."

"I've not seen our Zaporozhians. I've only seen my lord Andriy."

"You've seen Andriy!" cried Taras. "Well, Jew, where did you see him? in a dungeon? in a pit? dishonoured? bound?"

"Who would dare to bind my lord Andriy! He is such a grand knight now. By heavens, I hardly knew him! His shoulder-pieces all gold, his brassards all gold, his breastplate all gold, and his helmet all gold, and everywhere and everything gold. He shines, all gold, just as the sun shines in spring-time, when every bird is chirping and singing in the garden and the grass smells so sweet. And the voivode gave him his best saddle-horse; that horse alone is worth two hundred *chervontsi*!"

Bulba was petrified.

"But why has he put on this foreign suit of armour?"

"Because it's finer. And he rides about, and the others ride about; and he teaches them, and they teach him. Just like the richest Polish lord!"

"Who forced him to do this?"

"I do not say anyone has forced him. Does not my lord know that he went over to them of his own free will?"

"Who went over?"

"Why, my lord Andriy!"

"Went where?"

"Went over to their side; he is theirs all over now."

"You lie, you swine's ear!"

"How can I lie! Am I a fool that I should lie! Would I lie at the risk of my head! Don't I know that the Jew who lies to a lord will be hanged like a dog!"

"So it means from what you say that he has sold his country and his faith?"

"I do not say he has sold anything; I only say he's gone over to them."

"You lie, you accursed Jew! Such a thing never happened on Christian earth! You lie, you cur!"

"May the grass grow on the threshold of my house if I lie! May everyone spit on the graves of my father, my mother, my father-in-law, and my father's father, and my mother's father if I lie! If my lord so wishes, I'll even say why he went over to them."

"Why?"

"The voivode has a beautiful daughter—great God! what a beautiful daughter!"

Here the Jew tried as well as he could to make his face express beauty; he spread out his arms, screwed up an eye, and twisted his mouth, as if he had just tasted something delicious.

"Well, and what of that?"

"He did it all and went over for her sake. When a man's in love he is just like the sole of a shoe—soak it in water and bend it any way you like."

Bulba was lost in thought. He remembered that great is the power of weak woman; that many strong men has she ruined; that Andriy was by nature most vulnerable to her charms. And long did he stand motionless, as though rooted to the spot.

"Listen, my lord, I will tell all to my lord," said the Jew. "As soon as I heard all that noise and saw them going into the town gates, I caught up a string of pearls I thought I might use, for there are beauties and noble ladies in the town; and where there are beauties and noble ladies, I said to myself, they are sure to buy pearls, even though they have nothing to eat. So as soon as the cornet's men set me free, I ran to the voivode's courtyard to sell my pearls, and I learned everything from a

Tatar maid there. 'There'll be a wedding the minute they drive off the Zaporozhians; my lord Andriy has promised to drive the Zaporozhians away!' "

"And you did not kill the devil's son on the spot?" roared Bulba.

"Why should he be killed? He went over of his own free will. What wrong has he done? It is better for him there, so there he went."

"And you saw him face to face?"

"By heavens, I did! Such a glorious warrior! grander than any of them! He knew me at once, God bless him; and when I went up to him he at once said—"

"What did he say?"

"He said—no, first he beckoned to me, and only then said, 'Yankel!' and I said, 'My lord Andriy!' 'Yankel, tell my father, tell my brother, tell the Cossacks, all the Zaporozhians, tell everyone that my father is no longer my father, my brother no brother, my comrade no comrade, and that I will fight them all! Every one of them will I fight!' "

"You lie, you infernal Judas!" shouted Taras in a rage. "You lie, dog! You crucified Christ himself, man accursed of God! I will kill you, Satan! Away with you, or stay and die here!" And with these words Taras whipped out his sabre.

The terrified Jew took to his heels instantly and ran as fast as his skinny, shrivelled legs could carry him. He ran a long time, without turning his head, through the Cossack camp and far into the open steppe, although Taras, seeing the folly of venting his wrath on the first comer, did not give chase at all.

He now recollected that on the night before he had seen Andriy walking through the camp with a woman; and he bowed his grey head, although he still would not believe that so shameful a thing could have happened, that his own son had sold his faith and his soul.

Finally he led his regiment into ambush and disappeared with it behind the only wood which had not yet been burned by the Cossacks. Meanwhile the Zaporozhians, foot and horse, advanced to the three roads leading to the three gates. One after the other the *kurens* marched: Uman, Popovich, Kanev, Steblikiv, Nezamai, Gurguz, Titarevka, Timoshevka; the Pereyaslav *kuren* alone was missing. Its Cossacks had drunk too deep of their vodka and had drowned in it their good fortune. Some awoke bound in the enemy's hands; others never awoke at all but passed in their sleep into the cold earth; and Ataman Khlib himself, bereft of his trousers and upper garments, had found himself in the Polish camp.

The enemy's movements were heard in the town; all crowded on its walls, and a lively picture was presented to the Cossacks: the Polish knights, each one more handsome than the next, stood on the ramparts. Brass helmets adorned with swan-white plumes shone like so many suns. Others wore small, light caps, pink or sky-blue, with the tops tilted to one side, and coats with sleeves hanging behind the shoulders, embroidered with gold or ornamented with lace. Many had richly mounted sabres and muskets, for which those gentlemen must have paid a dear price, and a profusion of other finery was to be seen. In front of all, with a haughty air stood the Budzhak colonel in a red cap with gold braid. He was a heavy man, taller and stouter than all the others, and his costly and ample overcoat hardly contained him. On the other hand, by the side gates, stood another colonel—a small, dried-up man, with tiny piercing eyes that gleamed sharply from under their bushy brows. He turned about briskly to all sides, pointing energetically with his thin, dry hand as he gave his orders; it was evident that in spite of his diminutive stature he was thoroughly versed in the science of war. Not far from him stood a long, lanky cornet, with thick mustachios

and a wealth of colour in his face—a sure sign that he loved strong mead and gay revelry. And many were the nobles to be seen behind him, who had all equipped themselves either with their own ducats, or from the king's treasury, or with money obtained from pawning everything they had in their ancestral castles to the Jews. There were also no few spongers on vain senators, whom these last took to dinner-parties for greater show, and who filched silver cups from the table and the sideboard, and when the day's show was over, mounted the noble-man's coach-box. Yes, the people there were a mixed lot. Some had not the price of a drink on their persons, but all had dressed up for war.

The Cossack ranks stood quietly before the walls. There was not an ounce of gold about their dress, and it only shone here and there on the hilt of a sabre or the mountings of a musket. The Cossacks did not like a rich battle-dress; their coats of mail and garments were plain, and their red-crowned caps of black sheepskin dotted the field.

Two Cossacks rode out from the Zaporozhian ranks; one was quite young, the other older; both sharp of tongue, and no mean Cossacks in deeds either—Okhrim Nash and Mikita Golokopitenko. Behind them rode Demid Popovich, a thickset Cossack, who had been for a long time at the Setch, had fought at Adrianople, and had gone through many an ordeal in his life: had nearly been burned at the stake, and had escaped to the Setch with tarred and charred head and singed mustachios. But Popovich had put on flesh again, curled his scalp-lock once more behind his ear, and grown thick mustachios as black as pitch. He, too, was a man of cutting words.

"Ha! Red coats on the whole army, but I swear they're white-livered inside!"

"I'll show you!" bellowed the stout colonel from above. "I'll put you all in chains! Give up your guns and your horses, you

serfs! Did you see how I bound your comrades? Ho, there! Bring the Zaporozhians out on the wall for them to see!"

The Zaporozhians, bound with ropes, were brought to the wall. In front of them was Khlib, the *kuren* ataman, minus his trousers and upper garments, just as he had been taken prisoner in his drunken sleep. He bowed his head, ashamed of being seen naked by his own Cossacks and of having been captured like a dog in his sleep. His hair had turned grey overnight.

"Cheer up, Khlib! We'll rescue you!" cried the Cossacks from below.

"Cheer up, friend!" added Borodaty, a *kuren* ataman. "It's not your fault that they took you naked—misfortune might happen to any man—but they ought to be ashamed of exposing you to scorn without giving you a decent covering."

"You're a brave army when you have to fight with sleeping men!" cried Golokopitenko, looking up at the wall.

"Wait a bit, we'll cut off your scalp-locks for you," shouted those above.

"I'd like to see them do it!" said Popovich. Then, turning in the saddle, he glanced back at the Cossacks and added, "But why not? Perhaps the Poles speak the truth. If that pot-belly up there leads them out, they will all have a good defence."

"Why do you suppose they'll have a good defence?" asked the Cossacks, knowing that Popovich was sure to have a joke ready.

"Why, the whole army might hide behind him, and you won't be able to get at anyone of them with your spears because of his belly."

All the Cossacks laughed; and many nodded their heads for a long time and then said, "Good old Popovich! His words are enough to—" But the Cossacks had no time to finish.

"Away, away from the walls!" yelled the *Koshevoi*. For the Poles, evidently, could not stomach the cutting words, and the colonel had waved his hand.

Hardly had the Cossacks retreated when grape-shot rained from the walls. All was in a bustle on the ramparts; the grey-haired voivode himself appeared on horseback. The gates opened and the troops sallied forth. In the vanguard rode hussars in well-matched ranks; then came a chain-mailed troop; then pike-men in armour; then a troop in brass helmets; then the highest nobles rode singly, each man dressed after his own taste. The haughty knights would not mix in the ranks with the others, and those of them who had no detachment to command rode apart with their own retainers. Then came more ranks, and after these rode the cornet; behind him were more ranks again, and the stout colonel on horseback; and in the rear of the whole army rode the little colonel.

"Don't let them range themselves!" yelled the *Koshevoi*. "Attack them—all *kurens* together! Leave the other gates! Titarevka *kuren*, attack the right flank! Dyadkiv *kuren*, attack the left! Kukubenko and Palivoda, fall on their rear! Break up their ranks! Scatter them!"

And the Cossacks charged from all sides, upset and confused their ranks, and broke in among them. They did not even give the enemy time to fire; spears and sabres came at once into play. They were all bunched together, and every man had a chance to show his mettle. Demid Popovich speared three plain men-at-arms and knocked two of the highest nobles from their horses, saying, "Good horses! I have long wanted to have such steeds!" And he drove the horses far afield, shouting to some Cossacks, standing there, to take care of them for him. This done, he again joined the *mêlée*, fell upon the dismounted nobles, killed one, and throwing his lasso around the neck of the other, tied

it to his saddle and dragged him across the field, having relieved him of his sabre with a costly hilt and a purse full of ducats, which hung at his girdle.

Kobita, a young Cossack and a good one, engaged one of the bravest Polish warriors, and they fought long together. They were already grappling hand to hand. The Cossack got the better of his foe at last, threw him down, and stabbed him in the chest with his sharp Turkish dagger. But the Cossack did not escape either; just then a fiery bullet struck him on the temple. His killer was the highest of nobles and the handsomest of knights, the scion of an ancient princely house. Stately as a poplar, he darted here and there on his light bay steed, and many feats of princely valour did he perform: two Cossacks had he hewn in twain; had brought down Fyodor Korzh, a good Cossack, together with his horse, shooting the horse and piercing the Cossack under it with his lance; many heads and hands did he chop off; and now he had shot the Cossack Kobita through the head.

"There's a man I'd like to try my strength with!" roared Kukubenko, the ataman of the Nezamai *kuren*. Spurring his horse, he rushed upon him from the rear, with such a loud and unearthly roar that all the men around shuddered. The Pole tried to wheel his horse round and face his foe, but his horse, startled by the terrible cry, bounded aside, and Kukubenko's musket ball hit its rider. It struck him in the shoulder-blade, and he fell from his horse. Even then he yielded not, and tried to strike back at his adversary, but his arm fell weakly beneath the weight of his sabre, and Kukubenko, taking his heavy broadsword in both hands, thrust it down his blanched mouth. The blade knocked out two of his sugar-white teeth, split the tongue in twain, shattered his neck, and went deep into the ground. Thus did he nail the knight for ever to the cold earth. His princely

blood, red as a guelder rose growing on a river-bank, spurted out in a fountain and stained his yellow, gold-embroidered coat. Kukubenko had already left him and cut his way, together with his men, into another part of the *mêlée*.

"Why, he has left such costly finery!" said Borodaty, the ataman of the Uman *kuren*, riding from his men to the spot where Kukubenko's victim lay dead. "I've killed seven nobles with my own hand, but such finery I have not beheld on anyone."

And Borodaty gave way to cupidity; he bent down to strip off the rich armour and had already seized a Turkish dagger set with jewels, untied a purse of ducats from the belt, taken off the bosom a pouch containing fine linen, rich silver, and a cherished love-token—a maiden's curl; but he saw not the red-nosed cornet, whom he had already twice unhorsed and given a good deep slash to remember him by, fly upon him from behind. The cornet swung his sword with all his might and brought it down upon Borodaty's bent neck. The Cossack's cupidity led him to no good: his mighty head sprang away; the trunk fell headless, reddening the earth far and wide; and his stern Cossack soul flew to eternity, gloomy and indignant, and surprised at having so soon deserted so stout a body.

The cornet had hardly grasped the ataman's head by its scalp-lock, in order to fasten it to his saddle, when a stern avenger appeared.

As the hawk, that soars in the sky and sweeps in wide circles on his mighty pinions, suddenly hangs poised in the air, and then swoops down upon the wayside quail, so did Bulba's son Ostap swoop upon the cornet, flinging a noose about his neck. The cornet's red face grew purple as the cruel noose tightened round his throat; he seized his pistol, but his stiffening hand could not aim straight, and the bullet flew wide. Then Ostap

unfastened the silken cord at the cornet's saddle, which he carried to bind his prisoners, and having bound the cornet hand and foot with his own cord, tied its end to his saddle and dragged him across the field, calling on all the Cossacks of the Uman *kuren* to come and render the last honours to their ataman.

As soon as the Uman Cossacks heard that their ataman was no longer among the living, they left the battlefield and ran to recover his body, and without delay began to deliberate as to whom they should select as their ataman. At length they said, "Why need we argue? We cannot find a better ataman than young Ostap Bulba. True, he's younger than any of us, but he has the judgement of an old man."

Ostap, doffing his cap, thanked all his Cossack comrades for the honour and did not refuse it, either on account of youth or of youthful judgement, knowing full well that it was not the season to do so in time of war; but at once led them straight into the affray and showed them all that they had not chosen him ataman for nothing.

The Poles felt that the battle was getting too hot for them, and retreated at a run across the field in order to form again at its farther end. The little colonel waved to the reserve of four fresh companies, stationed apart from the rest at the gates, and grape-shot flew thence into the Cossack crowds. But with little effect, for the shot only hit the Cossack oxen, which were gazing wild-eyed upon the battle. The oxen bellowed with fear and turned towards the Cossack camp, smashing the waggons and trampling many men underfoot. But Taras, rushing at this moment from his ambuscade, threw himself with his yelling regiment across their way. The maddened herd, startled by the noise, turned round and swooped down on the Polish regiments, laying low the cavalry and crushing and scattering them all.

"Thank you, oxen!" shouted the Zaporozhians. "You served us on the march, and now you serve us in war!" And they attacked the foe with redoubled strength.

Many of the enemy were killed there. Many of the Cossacks distinguished themselves: Metelitsya, Shilo, both of the Pisarenkos, Vovtuzenko, and many more. Seeing that the odds were against them, the Poles hoisted a standard and shouted for the town gates to be opened. The iron-bound gates opened with a creaking sound and received the weary and dust-covered riders, flocking like sheep into the fold. Quite a few Zaporozhians made to follow them, but Ostap stopped his Uman *kuren*, crying, "Keep from the walls! From the walls, gentlemen brothers! 'Tis not well to go near them." And he spoke truly, for the enemy on the walls opened fire at them and poured down everything that came to hand, and many of the attackers suffered. Then the *Koshevoi* rode up and praised Ostap, saying, "Here's a new ataman, yet he leads his *kuren* like an old one!" Old Bulba turned round to see who the new ataman was, and beheld Ostap sitting on his horse at the head of the Uman *kuren*, his cap tilted to one side and the ataman's mace in his hand. "There's a man for you!" cried Taras, gazing at him; and the old Cossack rejoiced and thanked the Uman Cossacks for the honour bestowed on his son.

The Cossacks were about to withdraw to their camp when the Poles again appeared on the town wall. But now their mantles were torn; many rich coats were spattered with blood, and dust covered the handsome brass helmets.

"Well, have you bound us?" cried the Zaporozhians to them from below.

"I'll show you!" the stout colonel shouted from above, repeating his former threat and shaking a rope.

And still the dust-covered, weary warriors continued to threaten

each other, and the most hot-headed on both sides exchanged gibes.

At last all retired. Some, exhausted by the fighting, lay down to rest; others sprinkled their wounds with earth and ripped kerchiefs and costly garments stripped from the slain foe into bandages; others again, who were the least weary, gathered the dead and paid them the last tributes. Graves were dug with broadswords and pikes; the earth was carried away in caps and in the skirts of their coats; the fallen Cossacks were reverently laid in the ground and covered with fresh earth that the cruel ravens and eagles might not peck out their eyes. But the corpses of the Poles were rudely bound by the dozen to the tails of wild horses, which they turned out into the steppe, chasing them and whipping them on the sides. The maddened horses flew over hill and hollow, across ditch and brook, dragging the gory and dusty corpses of the Poles over the ground.

Then the *kurens* sat down in circles to their supper, and talked far into the night about their battles and the feats that it had fallen to everyone to perform, and that would be sung till the end of time by posterity. Long they sat, and longer still sat Taras, pondering over Andriy's absence among the enemy's warriors. Had the Judas been ashamed to come forth against his own blood or had the Jew lied and Andriy been simply taken captive? But then he remembered that Andriy's heart was all too easily swayed by a woman's words; and he was torn with anguish, and vowed vengeance against the Pole who had bewitched his son. And he would have fulfilled his vow; he would not have looked at her beauty; he would have dragged her forth by her luxuriant plait across the whole field, in the sight of all the Cossacks. Her beautiful breasts and shoulders, white and gleaming as the never-thawing snows that cloak the crests of the mountains, would have beaten against the ground and

become covered with blood and dust; he would have torn to pieces her supple, lovely body. But Bulba knew not what God had prepared for the morrow and, growing drowsy, he at last fell asleep.

The Cossacks still talked among themselves; and the sober and wakeful sentinels stood all night by the fires, keeping a vigilant look-out on all sides.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The sun had not risen midway in the heavens when all the Zaporozhians were called to council. Word had come from the Setch that during the Cossacks' absence the Tatars had pillaged it, unearthed their treasures, killed or made prisoner all those who had stayed behind, and had set out with all the herds of cattle and droves of horses they had captured straight for Perekop. One Cossack only, Maxim Golodukha, had escaped on the way from the Tatars' hands, stabbed the Mirza, unfastened the bag of sequins that hung at his sash, and on a Tatar horse and in Tatar clothes, for one day and a half and two whole nights, had fled from his pursuers; he had ridden his horse to death, mounted another, killed that one, too, and reached the Zaporozhian camp on a third, having learned on the road that the Zaporozhians were at Dubno. He could only manage to tell them of the misfortune; but how it happened—whether the remaining Zaporozhians had drunk too deeply after the Cossack fashion and had fallen drunk into captivity, and how the Tatars had discovered the spot where the army treasury lay hidden—he did not say. His strength spent, his whole body swollen, and his face burned and scorched by the wind, he fell on the spot and was instantly fast asleep.

In such cases it was a rule with the Cossacks to set out in pursuit of the abductors at once and endeavour to overtake them on the road, for the captives might soon be sent to the slave markets of Asia Minor, Smyrna, or the Island of Crete, and God knows in what places the Cossack scalp-lock might not be seen. This was why the Zaporozhians had now assembled. All to the last man, they stood with their caps on, for they had not come to take orders from their atamans, but to deliberate as equals among themselves.

"First let the elders give counsel!" shouted some in the crowd.

"Counsel us, *Koshevoi*!" said others.

And the *Koshevoi* took off his cap, and speaking not as their chief but as their comrade, thanked the Cossacks for the honour and said:

"There are many among us who are older and wiser in counsel, but as you have honoured me, my counsel is this: waste no time, comrades, but go in pursuit of the Tatars, for you know yourselves what the Tatar is. He will not await our coming, but will squander his booty in a twinkling and leave no trace. So my counsel is—to set out. We have had good sport here. The Poles know now what Cossacks are; we have avenged our faith as best we could, and a starving town is of little use. And so my counsel is to go."

"Let us go!" shouted the *kurens* in a mighty voice.

But such words did not please Taras Bulba at all; and still lower over his eyes did he draw his frowning, grizzly brows; like black bushes they were, growing on a high mountain peak and sprinkled with needly northern rime.

"Nay, your counsel is not good," said he, "you cannot say that. You have forgotten, it seems, that our captive comrades remain here in Polish hands. You seem to want us to go against

the first and most sacred law of comradeship, to leave our Cossack brethren to be flayed alive or quartered, and carted through the towns and villages, as was done with the hetman and the best Russian knights in the Ukraine. Have they not desecrated all we hold sacred without that? What manner of men are we, I ask you? What manner of Cossack is he who leaves his comrade in misfortune, who leaves him to perish in foreign parts like a dog? If it has come to such a pass that no Cossack values his honour, and allows himself to be abused and his grey mustachios be spat upon, then let no one reproach me. I will stay here alone!"

All the Zaporozhians wavered.

"And could it be that you have forgotten, brave colonel," said the *Koshevoi* then, "that there are comrades of ours in the Tatars' hands, too, and that unless we rescue them now they will be sold into lifelong slavery to infidels, which is a fate worse than the cruelest death? Have you forgotten that they now hold all our treasures, won by Christian blood?"

The Cossacks pondered over this, not knowing what to say. None wished to bring infamy on his own head. Then forward stepped Kasyan Bovdyug, the oldest in all the Zaporozhian army. He was honoured by all the Cossacks; had twice been elected *Koshevoi*, and had been as good a Cossack as the best in the wars; but he had long grown old and had ceased to take part in campaigns; neither did the old warrior like to give advice to anyone, but loved to lie on his side in the Cossack circles and listen to tales of war and adventure. He never joined in their talk, but would listen to every word, and press the ashes with his finger in his short pipe, which never left his mouth; would sit long thus with his eyes half-closed, so that the Cossacks never knew whether he were asleep or still listening. He had stayed home during other campaigns, but

this time the old Cossack could not help himself; he waved his hand in Cossack fashion and said, "Happen what will, I'll go with you; I may yet be of use to Cossackdom!"

All the Cossacks grew quiet as he now stepped forward before the assembly; it was a long time since they had heard him speak. Everyone wanted to know what Bovdyug had to say.

"The time has come, gentlemen brothers, for me to say my word!" he began. "Listen, children, to an old man. Wise were the *Koshevoi*'s words; and as the head of the Cossack army, who is bound to protect it and preserve its treasures, he could not have spoken wiser. That is so! Let that be my first word. And now listen to my second word. Here is my second word: great also was the truth of what Colonel Taras said—God grant him a long life, and more such colonels to the Ukraine! The Cossack's first duty and first honour is to be true to the law of comradeship. In my long life I have never heard of a Cossack deserting or betraying a comrade. These Cossacks here and those taken at the Setch are our comrades; it matters not where there be few and where many: all are our comrades, all are dear to us. So this is my word: let those to whom the Tatar prisoners are dearer, go after the Tatars, and let those to whom the Polish prisoners are dearer, and who do not want to desert a just cause, stay behind. Let the *Koshevoi* do his duty and lead one half after the Tatars, and let the other half choose a Lieutenant *Koshevoi*. And if you will but listen to a white head, no man is fitter to be the Lieutenant *Koshevoi* than Taras Bulba. None of us is his equal in valour!"

Thus spoke Bovdyug and was silent. And all the Cossacks rejoiced at this wise counsel from the old Cossack. All flung up their caps and shouted, "Thank you, *Batko*! You've kept silent for a long, long time, but you've spoken at last! Not in vain

did you promise to be useful to Cossackdom—and so it has turned out!"

"Well, do you all agree to that?" asked the *Koshevoi.*

"Yes, we do!" shouted the Cossacks.

"Then the *Rada* is over?"

"Yes, the *Rada* is over," shouted the Cossacks.

"Then listen, children, to my orders!" said the *Koshevoi,* stepping forward and putting on his cap, while all the Zaporozhians to a man took off their caps and stood uncovered, with eyes fixed on the ground, as was always their custom when an elder prepared to speak. "Now divide, gentlemen brothers! Whoever wishes to go, step to the right; whoever wishes to stay, to the left! Whither the greater part of his *kuren* steps, thither its ataman is to go; the lesser part is to join other *kurens.*"

And they all began to cross either to the right or to the left. Whither the greater part of a *kuren* went, thither its ataman followed, and the lesser part joined other *kurens.* It came out that the sides were almost equal. Those who wished to remain were nearly the whole of the Nezamai *kuren,* the entire Uman and Kanev *kurens,* and the larger half of the Popovich, Steblikiv and Timoshevka *kurens.* All the rest chose to go after the Tatars. Many were the brave and strong Cossacks on either side. Among those who volunteered to go in pursuit of the Tatars were Cherevaty, a good old Cossack, Pokotipolye, Lemish, and Khoma Prokopovich. Demid Popovich also went over to their side, for he was a restless Cossack and could never stay long anywhere; he had seen battle with the Poles, and now wanted to pit himself against the Tatars. There, too, were the *kuren* atamans: Nostyugan, Pokrishka, Nevelichky; and many other brave and renowned Cossacks wished to test sabre and muscle in a battle with the Tatars. There were a good many worthy Cossacks among those who wished to stay behind: the *kuren*

atamans Demitrovich, Kukubenko, Vertikhvist, Balaban, and Ostap Bulba, and many other stout and famous Cossacks—Vovtuzenko, Cherevichenko, Stepan Guska, Okhrim Guska, Mikola Gusty, Zadorozhny, Metelitsya, Ivan Zakrutiguba, Mosy Shilo, Degtyarenko, Sidorenko, Pisarenko, the second Pisarenko, and still another Pisarenko, and many, many other good Cossacks. All of them had travelled much: had roved along the Anatolian coasts, and across the Crimean salt-marshes and steppes, along all the rivers, large and small, that flow into the Dnieper, along its inlets and islands; had visited Moldavian, Wallachian, and Turkish lands; they had sailed all over the Black Sea in their double-ruddered Cossack boats; they had attacked, with a fleet of fifty boats, the richest and greatest ships, sunk not a few Turkish galleys, and shot much, very much powder in their time. More than once had they torn up costly silk and velvet for foot-wraps. More than once had they filled the purses hanging at their belts with bright sequins. And it would have been impossible to reckon how much property—enough to keep other men in comfort their whole lives—they had spent in drinking and feasting. They had squandered it all in true Cossack fashion, treating one and all and hiring musicians that all the world might be merry. Even now, few of them had no treasure—cups, silver goblets and bangles—hidden in the reeds on the Dnieper islands in order that the Tatar might not discover it, if by mischance he should fall suddenly upon the Setch; it would be difficult for the Tatar to find it, though, for the owners themselves had begun to forget where they had buried it. Such were the Cossacks who wished to remain and take vengeance on the Poles for their faithful comrades and the Christian faith!

The old Cossack Bovdyug likewise resolved to stay with them, saying:

"My years will not let me chase the Tatars; and here is a place where I may die a good Cossack death. I have long prayed God that when my time comes to die, I may die in battle for the holy Christian cause. And so it has come about. Nowhere could there be a more glorious death for an old Cossack."

When all had divided and lined up in *kurens*, in two rows, the *Koshevoi* walked between them and said, "Well, gentlemen brothers, is each side pleased with the other?"

"We are all pleased, *Batko*!" answered the Cossacks.

"Well, kiss one another and bid one another farewell, for God alone knows whether you shall ever meet again. Listen to your ataman, but do you what is fit, what Cossack honour bids you."

And all the Cossacks, as many as there were, kissed one another. First the atamans began; patting down their grey mustachios, they kissed each other's cheeks and then they took each other's hands and held them in a long clasp. Each longed to ask the other, "Shall we ever meet again, gentleman brother?" but they kept silent, and both grey-heads were lost in thought, while all around them the Cossacks were taking leave of one another, knowing that much hard work lay ahead for both sides. However, they decided not to separate at once, but to wait till it was dark, so as not to let the Poles notice the decrease in the Cossack army. Then they all went to their *kurens* for dinner.

After dinner, those who had to take to the road lay down and fell into a long and deep sleep, as though foreseeing that this was their last sleep to be enjoyed in such blissful security. They slept till the sun set; and when the sun had gone down and it grew dark, they began to tar the waggons. When all was ready, they sent their waggons ahead and once more doffed their caps to their comrades before slowly following the waggons.

The cavalry trotted lightly after the infantry, with never a shout or a whistle, and soon all vanished in the darkness. Not a sound was to be heard but the hollow thud of the horses' hoofs and the creaking of a wheel that was not yet going properly, or had not been tarred well enough in the dark.

The comrades they were leaving behind waved after them for a long time, although they could no longer see anything. And when they turned and went back to their places and saw by the light of the stars, which now glimmered brightly, that half the waggons were gone and that many, many comrades were no longer among them, their hearts grew sad, and all became thoughtful and drooped their jolly heads.

Taras saw that the Cossack ranks had become mournful and that sorrow, unbecoming to brave men, had bent the Cossacks' heads, but he kept his peace, for he wanted them to get used to their sorrow at parting with their comrades, and made ready to rouse them all at once with a loud Cossack battle-cry, in order that good cheer might return to each soul and bring greater strength than before, of which the broad and powerful Slav nature is alone capable—for it is to others what the sea is to shallow rivers. When the weather is stormy, it roars and thunders and raises such mountainous waves as feeble streams can never raise; but when it is windless and quiet, it spreads its boundless glassy surface, clearer than any river, an everlasting delight to the eye.

Taras ordered his servants to unpack a waggon which stood apart. It was larger and sturdier than any in the Cossack baggage-train; its massive wheels were encased in double iron hoops; it was heavily loaded, covered with horse-cloths and strong ox-hides, and lashed with tarred ropes. It was laden with casks and barrels of good old wine, which had long lain in Bulba's cellars. He had brought it along in anticipation of a solemn occasion,

in case a great moment should arrive when a battle awaited them worthy of being handed down to posterity, so that each Cossack, from first to last, might drink of the treasured wine in order that at a great moment great feelings might be inspired in every man. On hearing the colonel's command, his servants rushed to the waggon, cut the stout ropes with their broadswords, tore away the thick ox-hides and horse-cloths, and took down the casks and barrels.

"Take them all," said Bulba, "all there are. Take whatever you've got—a scoop or a bucket for watering the horses, a gauntlet or a cap; and if you have none of these, just cup your hands!"

And all the Cossacks, as many as there were, armed themselves with a scoop, or a bucket for watering their horses, or a gauntlet, or a cap, or, if they had none of these, just cupped their hands. And Bulba's servants, making their way among them, poured out the wine from the casks and barrels. But Taras ordered them not to drink until he should give the signal for all to drink together. He was evidently about to say something. Taras knew full well that however strong the good old wine might be and however capable of rousing a man's spirits, yet, if a well-chosen word were to go with it, the strength of both the wine and the spirit would be doubled.

"I regale you, gentlemen brothers," thus spoke Bulba, "not because you have made me your ataman, great though that honour is, and not because of our parting from our comrades; no, at another time to do both would be fitting; but this moment is not a fitting one. The battles before us demand much sweat and great Cossack valour! So let us drink, comrades, all together and before all else to the holy Orthodox faith, that the day may at last come when it shall spread over all the world, and that everywhere there might be but one holy faith, and that all

infidels to a man may turn Christians! And let us then drink to the Setch, that it may stand long to the confusion of all infidels, that every year it may send forth gallant warriors, each better and handsomer than the other. And then let us drink all together to our own glory, that our grandsons and their sons may say that there were once men who did not betray comradeship and did not leave their friends in need. So to the faith, gentlemen brothers, to the faith!"

"To the faith!" boomed those standing in the nearest ranks.

"To the faith!" joined in the back ranks; and all, both young and old, drank to the faith.

"To the Setch!" said Taras and raised his hand high above his head.

"To the Setch!" returned the front ranks in a deep-throated echo. "To the Setch!" said the old men softly, twitching their grey mustachios; and the young Cossacks, rousing themselves like young falcons, repeated after them, "To the Setch!"

And the steppe far away heard the Cossacks salute their Setch.

"A last draught now, comrades, to our glory and to all Christians living on earth!"

And all the Cossacks, to the last man in the field, drank the last draught to their glory and to all Christians that live upon the earth. And long the shout resounded among the *kuren* ranks, "To all Christians living on earth!"

Their cups were empty, but the Cossacks still stood with uplifted arms, and though their eyes gleamed merrily with the wine, they were thinking deeply. No longer of the gain and spoils of war were they thinking now, nor of those who would be lucky enough to take ducats, rich arms, embroidered *caftans*, and Circassian horses. Like eagles perched on the craggy mountain-tops, from which may be seen the boundless sea, dotted, as with tiny birds, with galleys, ships, and every manner of vessel, and

bordered only by the scarcely visible coasts, with towns no bigger than midges, and woods as low as grass—like eagles they gazed out on the steppe, and on their fate darkling far and dim before them. The time shall come when all the plain, its wastes and its roads, will be strewn with their white bones, drenched with their blood and covered with shattered waggons, broken sabres and spears. Far and wide will their heads lie, with twisted and blood-clotted scalp-locks and drooping mustachios. The eagles, swooping down, will peck and claw out their eyes. But great will be the fame of that wide and bone-strewn camp of death! Not a single lion-hearted deed will be lost, and Cossack glory will not perish like a tiny grain of powder from a gun-barrel. The time shall come when the *bandura*-player, his grey beard falling upon his breast, a white-headed old man still full perhaps of ripe manly vigour, and with the spirit of a prophet, shall sing of them in deep, powerful words. And their glory will sweep the world, and all who are born thereafter will speak of them; for the word of power carries far, like the brass of a bell, into which the founder has poured much pure and precious silver, that its beautiful ringing might be borne afar through town and hamlet, palace and hovel, calling all men equally to prayer.

CHAPTER NINE

No one in the town knew that half the Zaporozhians had set out in pursuit of the Tatars. From the tower of the town hall the sentinels had indeed noticed that part of the waggons had been driven into the woods; but it was thought that the Cossacks were preparing an ambuscade; the French engineer was of the same opinion. Meanwhile, the *Koshevoi*'s words were borne out: the town was again faced with a dearth of victuals. As was

usual in past centuries, the troops had miscalculated their needs. They tried to make a sortie, but one half of the dare-devils who took part in it were instantly slaughtered by the Cossacks, and the other half driven empty-handed back into the town. The Jews, however, had taken advantage of the sortie and ferreted out everything: whither and why the Zaporozhians had set out; with what chieftains; which particular *kurens*; in what number; how many had stayed behind; and what their plans were—in short, within a few minutes everything was known in the town. The colonels took courage and prepared to give battle. Taras perceived as much from the noise and bustle in the town, and took prompt action, giving injunctions and instructions, forming the *kurens* in three encampments and surrounding them with waggons as with barricades—a stratagem which had often made the Zaporozhians invincible—ordered two *kurens* to go into ambuscade, and drove sharp stakes, broken guns, and stumps of spears into part of the field, where he intended to drive the enemy's cavalry if possible. When all was done to his satisfaction, he made a speech to the Cossacks, not to encourage and cheer them—he knew them to be spirited enough without that—but simply because he wished to unburden his own heart.

"I wish to tell you, gentlemen, what our comradeship is. You have heard from your fathers and grandfathers how highly esteemed our country has been by all: it caused itself to be known to the Greeks; took tribute from Constantinople; our towns were rich, and we had, too, our temples, and our princes—princes of Russian blood, not Catholic heretics. Of all this have we been robbed; all has perished. We alone remained, poor orphans, and our bereaved land, too, like the widow of a mighty husband. At such a time, comrades, we joined hands in brotherhood! This is what our comradeship stands upon! No ties are holier than those

of comradeship! The father loves his child, the mother loves her child, and the child loves its father and mother; but that is something else: the wild beast also loves its young. But man alone knows kinship of the soul and not of blood. There have been brotherhoods in other lands, too, but none ever as on our Russian earth. A good number of you have spent many a year in foreign lands; you have seen men there, God's men like yourselves, and you have talked with them as with our own folk; but when it came to speaking from the heart, then you saw that they were wise men, but not like yourselves at all, that they were and yet were not men like yourselves! No, brothers, to love as the Russian soul loves—to love not with the mind or anything else, but with all that God has given you, with all you have, and...." Here Taras waved his hand, and shook his grey head, and twitched his mustachios, and then went on, "No; no one else can love like that! I know that knavish ways have taken root in our land: there are those who think only of their ricks of wheat and hay, and their droves of horses; who care only for the safety of their sealed casks of mead in their cellars. They ape the devil knows what heathen customs; loathe their mother tongue; countryman speaks not with countryman; countryman sells countryman as soulless brutes are sold in the market. The mean favour of a foreign king—not even of a king, but of a Polish magnate, who kicks them in the snout with his yellow boot—is dearer to them than any brotherhood. But even the vilest of these villains, no matter how low he has fallen for all his fawning and grovelling in the mud, even he, brothers, has a spark of Russian feeling. And it will flame up one day; and the wretch will wring his hands and tear his hair, loudly cursing his vile life, and ready to redeem his shame with suffering. Let them all know what comradeship means on our Russian earth! As for dying—why, not one of them could ever die as

we are ready to die! Not one! Their mouse-hearted natures would never let them!"

Thus spoke the ataman; and when he fell silent, he still shook his head, grown silvery in Cossack deeds. All who stood there were deeply moved by his words; straight to their hearts did they go. The oldest in the ranks stood motionless, their grey heads bent; tears filled their aged eyes; slowly they brushed them away with their sleeves. Then all, as with one accord, waved their hands and shook their wise heads. Clearly, old Taras had stirred in them many of those dear and best-loved feelings that live in the heart of a man grown wise in suffering, toil, bravery, and the hardships of life; or in the pure heart of a young man, who, though unacquainted with them, yearns for them with all the ardour of youth, to the eternal pride and joy of his aged parents.

Meanwhile, the enemy host was already sallying out of the town, drums were rolling, trumpets were sounding; and the nobles, arms akimbo, were riding forth, surrounded by their innumerable retainers. The stout colonel gave his orders, and they bore down in a close mass on the Cossack encampments, arms raised threateningly, aiming their arquebuses, eyes flashing, their brass armour glittering.

As soon as the Cossacks saw that they had come within gunshot, their long-barrelled arquebuses thundered in a volley, and they kept firing with never an interval. The loud thunder-claps resounded far over field and meadow, merging into a steady roar; the whole plain was shrouded in smoke; the Zaporozhians kept firing without pausing to draw breath—those behind loaded the guns for those in front, thus dumbfounding the enemy, who could not understand how the Cossacks fired without reloading. Already the smoke enveloping the two armies was so dense that nothing could be seen; none could see how first one and then another dropped in the ranks; but the Poles felt very well how

thick the shot was and how hot the affair was growing; and when they fell back, to escape from the smoke and look around them, many of their men were found to be missing, though only two or three out of every Cossack hundred were killed. And still the Cossacks went on firing off their arquebuses without a moment's interval. Even the foreign engineer was amazed at their tactics, which he had never seen before, and said then and there, in the presence of all, "These Zaporozhians are brave fellows! That is the way battles should be fought in other lands too!" And he advised that the cannon should be at once turned on the encampments. The cast-iron cannon roared with their wide throats; the earth shook and hummed far about, and the smoke rose twice as heavy over the whole plain. The reek of powder was carried to the streets and squares of towns far and near. But the gunners had aimed too high, and the red-hot balls described too wide a curve. With a fearful screech, they rushed over the heads of the Cossacks and sank deep into the ground, tearing up and tossing the black earth high in the air. The French engineer tore his hair at such lack of skill, and undertook to lay the cannon himself, heeding not the Cossack bullets, which showered round him hot and thick.

Taras saw from afar that the whole Nezamai and Steblikiv *kurens* were in mortal danger, and shouted in a voice of thunder, "Away from the waggons at once, and mount your horses all!" But the Cossacks would not have had time to do both these things had not Ostap galloped into the midst of the foe; he knocked the linstocks from the hands of six gunners but could not reach the other four, being driven back by the Poles. Meanwhile, the French engineer had seized a linstock in his own hand to fire off the largest cannon of all, such as none of the Cossacks had ever seen before. Its wide jaws gaped horribly, and a thousand deaths lurked within. And as it thundered, and the three

others followed it, shaking the dully responsive earth with their fourfold blast—much woe did they work. More than one old mother will mourn her Cossack son, beating her withered bosom with bony hands, more than one widow will be left in Glukhov, Nemirov, Chernigov, and other towns. The poor woman will run every day to the market, grasping at every passer-by, staring into the eyes of each to see if the one dearest to her were not among them. But though many an army will pass the town, never will she find among them her dearest.

Half the Nezamai *kuren* was no more. As the hail suddenly lays low the field where every ear of grain shone like a gold *chervonets*, so were they laid low.

How the Cossacks raged! How they all rushed forward! How did Ataman Kukubenko boil with ire when he beheld that the best half of his *kuren* was gone! In a twinkling, together with his remaining Cossacks, he cut his way to the very midst of the enemy's ranks. In his fury, he hacked to pieces as a head of cabbage the first man he met, unhorsed many a rider, piercing man and horse with his lance. He reached the gunners and captured one of the cannon. There he saw that the ataman of the Uman *kuren* and Stepan Guska were on the point of seizing the largest cannon. He left them there and wheeled with his Cossacks towards another mass of the foe. And wherever the Nezamai Cossacks passed, they left a street behind them; wherever they turned, they left a lane of slaughtered Poles, mowing them down in sheaves. Hard by the waggons fought Vovtuzenko, and in front Cherevichenko; by the more distant ones fought Degtyarenko, and behind him, the *kuren* ataman Vertikhvist. Two nobles had Degtyarenko already speared, and was now attacking an obstinate third. This antagonist was agile and stalwart, attired in rich armour, and accompanied by fifty retainers. Furiously he pressed back Degtyarenko,

threw him to the ground, and swinging his sabre over him, shouted, "None of you Cossack dogs will dare to fight me!"

"Here's one that will!" said Mosy Shilo, springing forward. He was a brawny Cossack, had more than once been ataman at sea, and had endured many hardships of every kind. The Turks had once seized him and his Cossacks near Trebizond and had made them all galley slaves, chaining them hand and foot and giving them no millet for a week at a time, and nothing to drink but brine. The poor slaves endured all rather than renounce their Orthodox faith. But Ataman Mosy Shilo could endure it no longer; he trampled the holy law underfoot, wound the accursed turban round his sinful head, gained the Pasha's confidence, and became keeper of the keys and overlord of the slaves. The poor slaves were greatly aggrieved, for they knew well that when one of their own people forfeited their faith and joined their oppressors, his tyranny was greater and harder to bear than that of any infidel. And so it turned out. Mosy Shilo had them all bound by threes with new chains, lashed them down with cruel ropes which cut to the very bone, and slapped them unmercifully on the napes of their necks. But when the Turks, rejoicing at having obtained such a servant, began to feast and all got drunk, forgetful of their law, he took every one of the sixty-four keys and distributed them among the slaves, that they might unlock their chains, fling chains and fetters into the sea, take swords in their stead, and cut down the Turks. Rich booty did the Cossacks seize then; and they returned with glory to their motherland, and long did the *bandura*-players sing the praises of Mosy Shilo. He might have been elected *Koshevoi*, but he was a queer fellow. At one time he would perform a feat beyond the contrivance of the wisest; at another, folly took possession of him. He drank and feasted

all his riches away, was in debt to everyone at the Setch, and on top of it all, stole like a common thief: one night he carried off a full Cossack's equipment from another *kuren* and pawned it to the pot-house keeper. For this shameful deed he was bound to a post in the market, and a bludgeon was laid beside him, so that every passer-by might deal him a blow according to his strength. But not a single Zaporozhian raised the bludgeon against him, for all remembered his past services. Such was the Cossack Mosy Shilo.

"Many here will beat you curs!" cried he, attacking his challenger.

How they did fight! The shoulder-pieces and breastplates of both bent under their blows. The devil of a Pole cut through Shilo's shirt of mail, reaching the flesh with his blade. The Cossack's shirt was dyed crimson. But Shilo heeded it not; he swung high his sinewy arm (and a heroic arm it was!) and stunned him with a sudden blow. His brass helmet flew into pieces; the Pole tottered and fell, and Shilo went on cutting and hacking his stunned adversary. Tarry not to dispatch thine enemy, Cossack: 'twere better to turn round! The Cossack did not turn round, and one of his victim's retainers plunged a knife into his neck. Shilo turned round and all but reached his slayer before he vanished amid the smoke of gunpowder. The roar of matchlocks sounded from every quarter. Shilo staggered, and realized that his wound was mortal. He fell on the ground, clasped his wound with his hand, and said to his comrades, "Farewell, gentlemen brothers, my comrades! May the holy Russian land live for ever, and for ever may it be honoured!" And he closed his dimmed eyes and his Cossack soul fled from its grim frame.

But there was Zadorozhny riding forth with his men, and Vertikhvist shattering the Polish ranks, and Balaban plunging into the fray.

"How now, brothers!" said Taras, calling to the atamans. "There is yet powder in the powder-horns? Cossack strength is yet not weakened? The Cossacks do not yield?"

"There is yet powder in the powder-horns, *Batko*! Cossack strength is yet not weakened! The Cossacks do not yield!"

And the Cossacks charged again and confused all the enemy ranks. The little colonel beat the assembly and ordered eight coloured standards to be hoisted to rally his men, who were scattered over all the plain. All the Poles ran to the standards; but they had not yet succeeded in ranging themselves, when Ataman Kukubenko charged their centre again with his Nezamai Cossacks and engaged the stout colonel himself. The colonel could not stand his ground against him; he turned his horse about and fled at a gallop. Kukubenko chased him far across the plain, cutting him off from his regiment. When Stepan Guska noticed this from his *kuren* on the flank, he set out to intercept him, lasso in hand, head close to his horse's neck; choosing his moment, he threw the noose about his neck. The colonel's face grew purple; he clutched the rope with both hands, endeavouring to break it, but a mighty thrust drove a pike into his belly. And there, pinned to the earth, he remained. But neither did Guska fare any better. Before the Cossacks knew it, there was Stepan Guska held up on four spears. The poor devil had only time to say, "Let all our foemen perish, and may the Russian land rejoice for ever!"

The Cossacks glanced around, and there was Metelitsya on the flank, treating Pole after Pole to stunning blows on their helmets; on the other flank Ataman Nevelichky was charging with his men; beside the waggons Zakrutiguba was mauling the foe; and by the more distant waggons the third Pisarenko was repulsing a whole band. And farther on they had come to clutches and were grappling on the very waggons.

"How now, brothers!" called Ataman Taras, galloping in front of them all. "There is yet powder in the powder-horns? Cossack strength is yet not weakened? The Cossacks do not yield?"

"There is yet powder in the powder-horns, *Batko*! Cossack strength is yet not weakened! The Cossacks do not yield!"

Bovdyug had already fallen from his waggon. A bullet had struck him just below the heart, but with his last breath the old Cossack said, "I sorrow not to part from the world. God grant every man such an end! May the Russian land be for ever glorious!" And Bovdyug's soul flew up to heaven to tell other old men long since departed how well they fight on Russian earth, and better still, how well they die there for the holy faith.

Soon after him, Balaban, the *kuren* ataman, dropped to the ground. Three mortal wounds—from spear, bullet, and heavy broadsword—had he received. He had been one of the most valiant Cossacks; in many sea expeditions had he been ataman; but the most glorious of all was his raid of the Anatolian coast. They had taken many sequins, costly Turkish goods, stuffs and clothing, but they came to grief on the homeward voyage, falling in, poor devils, with Turkish cannon. A broadside from the Turk sent half their boats spinning and capsized them, drowning more than one Cossack, though the rushes tied to their sides saved the boats from sinking. Balaban rowed off as fast as his oars could carry him, stopping in the face of the sun, so that the Turk could not see him. All night long they baled out the water with their buckets and caps and patched up the shot-holes; they cut up their wide Cossack trousers for sails and, sailing off at full speed, outran the swiftest Turkish ship. Not only did they arrive without mishap, but brought a gold-embroidered chasuble for the Archimandrite of the Mezhigorsk Monastery in Kiev and a setting of pure silver for the

Church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin, at Zaporozhye. Long did the *bandura*-players sing of Cossack luck. Now, in the agony of death, he bent his head and said quietly, "Methinks, gentlemen brothers, I am dying a noble death: I have cut down seven, piked nine. I have ridden over many, and how many I shot I cannot remember. May our Russian land flourish for ever!" And his soul flew away.

Cossacks, Cossacks! Abandon not the flower of your chivalry! Already is Kukubenko surrounded; already but seven men are left of the Nezamai *kuren*; and they, too, are already at the limit of their strength, and Kukubenko's garments are already stained with blood.

Taras himself, seeing his plight, hastened to his rescue. But the Cossacks arrived too late; a spear pierced Kukubenko just below the heart before the foe around him could be driven off. He sank into the arms of the Cossacks who held him up, and his young blood gushed forth in a stream, like priceless wine brought from the cellar in a glass vessel by careless servants, who, stumbling on the threshold, break the precious flask; the wine flows out over the ground to the last drop, and the master comes running and tearing his hair, for he had preserved it for the happiest moment of his life, hoping that God would grant him, in his old age, a meeting with a friend of his youth, that they might drink together to bygone times when a man made merry in another and a better way. Now Kukubenko rolled his eyes around and said, "I thank God, my comrades, that I die before your eyes. May those who live after us be better men than we, and may our Russian land, beloved of Christ, be ever beautiful!"

And away flew his young soul. The angels took it in their arms and bore it to heaven. He will have a good time there. "Sit ye down at my right hand, Kukubenko!" will Christ say to him. "Thou hast not betrayed the comrades, nor done any dishonour-

able deed, nor forsaken a man in distress; thou hast protected and preserved my Church!"

Kukubenko's death saddened them all. The Cossack ranks were growing thinner; many, many brave men were missing; yet still they kept their ground and stood firm.

"How now, brothers!" called Taras to the remaining *kurens*. "There is yet powder in the powder-horns? Your sabres are not yet blunt? Cossack strength is not yet wearied? The Cossacks do not give way?"

"There is still powder enough, *Batko*! Our sabres are still sharp! Cossack strength is yet not wearied! The Cossacks do not give way!"

And once more they charged forward, as though they had suffered no loss. Already only three *kuren* atamans remained alive. Crimson streams of blood flowed everywhere; the bodies of the Cossacks and their foemen, heaped together, were like tall bridges above them. Taras glanced up at the sky, and lo! already a string of gerfalcons stretched across the heavens. What a feast they would have! And there Metelitsya was being raised on a spear. And there rolled the head of the second Pisarenko, with fluttering eyelids. And there Okhrim Guska doubled up and crashed to the ground, hewn in four pieces. "Now!" said Taras and waved his kerchief. Ostap caught the signal and came hurtling from his ambuscade, dealing a mighty blow to the enemy's cavalry. The Poles gave way before this onslaught, and he drove them on and on, straight towards that part of the field which was studded with stakes and stumps of spears. The horses stumbled and fell, and their riders flew over their heads. At that moment the Korsun Cossacks, who stood farthest behind the waggons, seeing that the foe was within gun-shot, thundered away all of a sudden from their match-locks. The Poles were thrown into confusion, they lost their heads completely; and the Cossacks took heart.

"The victory is ours!" shouted the Zaporozhians on all sides; they blew their trumpets and unfurled the banner of victory. The vanquished Poles were running and hiding everywhere.

"No, the victory is not yet ours!" said Taras, looking towards the town gates; and truly did he speak. The gates opened, and out dashed a regiment of hussars, the pick of the cavalry. Every rider was mounted on a matched chestnut charger, large in size but swift of foot. Ahead galloped a knight, the bravest and handsomest of all. His black lock waved from beneath his brass helmet; a rich scarf fluttered from his arm, embroidered by the hand of the fairest beauty. Taras was struck dumbfounded when he saw that it was Andriy. He was entirely lost in the heat and fire of battle, eager to prove himself deserving of the token tied round his arm; he flew like a young greyhound, the handsomest, swiftest, and youngest of the pack; urged by the tally-ho of the skilled huntsman, he darts forward, legs outstrung in a straight line and body slantwise, tearing up the snow and a score of times outrunning the hare in the ardour of the chase. Old Taras stopped and watched how he cleared his way, scattering those in front, hewing them down, and striking to right and left. Unable to stand the sight, Taras roared, "What! Your own comrades? You would kill your own comrades, you devil's son?"

But Andriy saw not who were before him, friends or enemies. Nothing did he see, but—curls, long curls, and a bosom white as the river swan's, and a snowy neck, and shoulders, and all that was created for mad, passionate kisses.

"Hey there, children! Do you but lure him to yonder wood for me!" yelled Taras. In a flash, thirty of the swiftest Cossacks rode forth to fulfil his command. They settled their tall caps more firmly on their heads and raced to meet the hussars. They attacked the foremost in flank, confused them, cut them off from the ranks behind, and meted out a few hearty blows, while

Golokopitenko brought down the flat of his sword on Andriy's back; and then all fled from the hussars at the top of their Cossack speed. How heated did Andriy become! How his young blood did boil in every vein! Digging his sharp spurs into his horse's flanks, he set off at his utmost speed after the Cossacks, with never a backward glance, not knowing that only twenty of his men were able to keep up with him. The Cossacks rode at full gallop and turned straight towards the wood. Andriy hurtled forward on his steed and had almost overtaken Golokopitenko, when a strong hand seized his bridle. Andriy whirled round: before him was Taras! He trembled all over and turned suddenly pale....

Thus does a schoolboy—who, having imprudently offended his classmate and received a blow on the forehead with a ruler, flares up, springs up in a fury from his bench to chase his terrified classmate, wishing to tear him to pieces, and then runs into the master entering the classroom—suddenly quell his frantic impulse and subdue his impotent wrath. Even so, in one instant did Andriy's wrath vanish, as though it had never been. And all he saw before him was his terrible father.

"Well, what are we to do now?" said Taras, gazing straight into his eyes.

But Andriy knew not what to say, and remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Well, son, have the Poles helped you?"

Andriy made no answer.

"So to betray—to betray your faith? to betray your comrades? Well, then! Get down from your horse!"

Obedient as a child, he dismounted and stood before Taras more dead than alive.

"Stand still, do not move! I begot you—and I will kill you!" said Taras, and stepping back, he took his gun from his shoulder.

White as a sheet stood Andriy; his lips moved gently as he uttered a name; it was not the name of his country, nor of his mother, nor of his brethren, but the name of the beautiful Pole. Taras fired.

As the ear of wheat cut down by the sickle, as the young lamb that feels the lethal steel at its heart, he dropped his head and fell on the grass without a word.

The filicide stood still and gazed long upon the lifeless body. He was handsome even in death: his manly face, so short a time ago filled with power and with irresistible fascination for every woman, was still marvellously beautiful; his black brows, like sombre crêpe, set off the pallor of his features.

"What a Cossack he might have been!" said Taras. "Tall of stature, black-browed, the face of a gentle, and an arm strong in battle. And he has perished, perished ignominiously, like a vile dog!"

"*Batko*, what have you done? Was it you who killed him?" said Ostap, riding up at this moment.

Taras nodded his head.

Ostap gazed intently into the dead eyes. He was filled with sorrow for his brother, and said at once, "Let us bury him decently, *Batko*, that no enemy may do any dishonour to him, nor the birds of prey tear his body."

"They'll bury him without our help!" said Taras. "He'll have plenty of weepers and mourners!"

For a minute or two he reflected whether he should leave him a prey to the wolves or show respect for his knightly valour, which the brave are bound to honour in every man. Then he saw Golokopitenko galloping towards him.

"Woe to us, Ataman! The Poles have grown stronger; fresh reinforcements have come to their rescue!"

Hardly had Golokopitenko done speaking, when Vovtuzenko galloped up.

"Woe to us, Ataman! A fresh force is coming up!"

Hardly had Vovtuzenko done speaking, when Pisarenko ran up on foot.

"Where are you, *Batko*? The Cossacks are seeking you. Already Ataman Nevilichky is killed, and Zadorozhny, and Cherevichenko! But the Cossacks stand firm, and will not die till they have seen you. They want you to see them at the hour of death."

"To horse, Ostap!" cried Taras, and hastened to his Cossacks, to look once more upon them and to let them behold their ataman before death's hour.

But before they could ride out of the wood, the enemy's host surrounded it on all sides, and horsemen armed with spears and sabres appeared everywhere between the trees.

"Ostap! Ostap! Don't give in!" shouted Taras, and unsheathing his sabre, he struck out on all sides.

Six men suddenly sprang upon Ostap; but they had chosen an evil hour: the head of one flew off; another went heels over head as he fell back; a spear pierced the ribs of the third; a fourth, more daring, dodged a bullet, and the fiery ball hit his horse's chest; the maddened steed reared and fell on the ground, crushing his rider under him.

"Well done, son! Well done, Ostap!" shouted Taras. "I'll deal with them in a like manner!"

And he kept beating off his assailants. Right and left he struck, showering his favours on the heads about him, never leaving his eyes off Ostap ahead. Then he saw no less than eight men closing round Ostap.

"Ostap! Ostap! Don't give in!"

But they had already overpowered Ostap. Now a lasso was thrown about his neck—now they were trussing him up—now they were bearing him away.

"Ostap! Oh, Ostap!" shouted Taras, fighting his way towards him and hacking everyone who crossed his path into mincemeat. "Ostap! Oh, Ostap!"

But then he himself was struck by something, like a heavy stone. Everything whirled and turned round before his eyes. For a moment there flashed before him a confusion of heads, spears, smoke, sparks of fire, and then—a fleeting vision of leafy boughs. And down he crashed like a felled oak, and a heavy mist covered his eyes.

CHAPTER TEN

"How long I've slept!" said Taras, coming to his senses as after a heavy drunken sleep and trying to make out the objects about him. A fearful weakness locked his limbs. The walls and corners of a strange room danced dimly before him. At last he saw that Tovkach was seated before him, apparently listening to his every breath.

"Yea," thought Tovkach, "you might well have slept for ever!" But he said nothing, only shook his finger, commanding silence.

"But tell me, where am I now?" asked Taras, gathering his thoughts and endeavouring to recall what had happened.

"Keep your peace!" cried his comrade sternly. "What more do you want to know? Don't you see that you are all cut up? 'Tis a fortnight now we've been galloping with you, without stopping to take breath, and you've been in a fever and babbling nought but rubbish. 'Tis the first time you've slept quietly. So keep your peace if you don't wish to bring woe upon your head."

But Taras still tried to collect his thoughts and to recall what had happened.

"Why, I was surrounded and nearly captured by the Poles! I had no way of fighting through that crowd!"

"Hold your tongue, I tell you, you devil's son!" shouted Tovkach crossly, as a nurse driven beyond patience cries out to a restless, naughty child. "What good will it do you to know how you escaped? It is enough that you did escape. There were men who would not desert you—that's all you need know! We have still many nights of hard riding before us. Do you think you are priced as a common Cossack? No, they have set a price of two thousand ducats on your head."

"And what of Ostap?" cried Taras suddenly; he strove to rise, and all at once remembered how Ostap had been seized and bound before his eyes, and that he must now be in Polish hands.

His old head was filled with grief. He tore the bandages from all his wounds, flung them far from him, tried to say something—and began to rave instead; fever and delirium again came over him, and he broke into a stream of incoherent, senseless words. His faithful comrade stood over him, swearing and showering gruff reproaches upon him. Then he took hold of his legs and arms, swaddled him up like a child, replaced all his bandages, wrapped him in an ox-hide, bound him up, and, roping him to his saddle, galloped away with him.

"I'll get you there dead or alive! I'll not let the Poles mock your Cossack bone and blood, tear your body to pieces, and cast them into the river. And if an eagle is to peck your eyes out of your skull, let it be an eagle of the steppe, our eagle, and not a Polish one, not one that flies from Polish soil. Dead or alive I'll get you to the Ukraine!"

Thus spoke the faithful comrade. Day and night he galloped without rest, and brought him, still unconscious, to the Zaporozhian Setch. There he untiringly doctored him with herbs and

lotions; he sought out a skilful Jewess, who for a whole month made him drink various potions; and at last Taras began to mend. Either the medicines or his iron constitution gained the upper hand, and in a month and a half he was on his feet again, his wounds healed, only the sabre scars showing how dangerously wounded he had been. But he had grown noticeably gloomy and sorrowful. Three deep furrows cut across his brow, never to leave it. He looked about him now: all was new in the Setch; all his old comrades were dead. Not one remained of those who had stood up for the just cause, for the faith and for brotherhood. And those who had gone with the *Koshevoi* in pursuit of the Tatars—they, too, had long since disappeared: all had laid down their heads, all had perished—some in battle, others in the hungry, waterless salt-marshes of the Crimea, others in shameful captivity; and the former *Koshevoi* and all the old comrades were no more; and weeds were growing over what was once seething Cossack strength. It seemed to him that there had been a great, riotous feast; all the dishes had been smashed in pieces; not a drop of wine was left anywhere; the guests and servants had pillaged all the costly cups and goblets; and now the host stood in dejection, thinking, "I would there had been no feast at all." In vain did they try to divert and cheer Taras; in vain did the long-bearded, grey *bandura*-players come by twos and threes to glorify his Cossack deeds. Grim and cold, he stared blankly at everything; and on his stolid face an unquenchable sorrow appeared at times, and, quietly drooping his head, he would moan, "My son! My Ostap!"

The Zaporozhians set out on a raid by sea. Two hundred boats were launched on the Dnieper; and Asia Minor saw them, with their shaven heads and long scalp-locks, as they put its thriving shores to fire and sword; saw the turbans of its people strewn, like its countless flowers, over the blood-drenched fields,

and floating along its coast. It saw many broad Zaporozhian trousers, besmeared with tar, and many brawny hands with black Cossack whips. The Zaporozhians devoured all the grapes and destroyed all the vineyards, left dung-hills in the mosques, used rich Persian shawls for sashes to gird their grimy coats. Long afterwards were their short Zaporozhian pipes to be found in those parts. Merrily they sailed back. A ten-gun Turk overtook them and with one broadside scattered their frail boats like birds. One-third of them were drowned in the depths of the sea; but the rest joined together again and reached the mouth of the Dnieper with twelve kegs full of sequins. But all this no longer interested Taras. He would go to the meadows and steppes as if to hunt, but his charge remained unfired. Laying down his musket, he would seat himself by the sea-shore, full of anguish. Long he sat there with drooping head, ever repeating, "My Ostap! My Ostap!" Before him the Black Sea spread and sparkled; the sea-gull shrieked in the distant reeds; his white mustachios gleamed like silver, and the tears dropped one after another.

At last Taras could bear it no longer. "Come what will, but I'll go and find out what has befallen him. Is he alive? or in his grave? or dead and unburied? I'll know, cost what it may!"

Within a week he was already in Uman, armed and mounted, with lance, sabre, travelling-flask at his saddle, a pot of gruel, cartridges, horse-shackles, and other equipment. He rode straight towards an ill-kept filthy hut, the tiny windows of which were almost invisible, so black were they with soot; its chimney was stopped with rags, and its roof was full of holes and covered with sparrows. A heap of rubbish lay before the very door. From one of the windows peered the head of a Jewess in a head-dress trimmed with discoloured pearls.

"Husband at home?" asked Bulba, getting down from his horse and fastening the bridle to an iron hook by the door.

"At home," said the Jewess, and hastened out at once with a scoop of wheat for the horse and a flagon of beer for the knight.

"Well, where's your Jew?"

"He is in the other room, praying," answered the Jewess, curtseying and wishing Bulba good health as he raised the flagon to his lips.

"Stay here, and feed and water my horse, while I go and speak with him alone. I have business with him."

The Jew was none other than Yankel. He had already settled there as leaseholder and pot-house keeper, gradually got nearly all the neighbouring noblemen and squires into his hands, gradually sucked up all the money, and had made his Jewish presence strongly felt in the region. Within a radius of three miles, not a single hut remained in order; everything had lived out its time, was falling in ruins; everything was being drunk away, and nought remained but poverty and rags; the whole region was laid waste as by a conflagration or a plague. And had Yankel lived there for another ten years, he would probably have laid waste the whole voivodeship.

Taras stepped into the room. The Jew was praying, his head covered with a rather dirty shroud, and he had just turned to spit for the last time, according to his religion, when his eyes suddenly lighted on Bulba, who had stopped behind him. The two thousand offered for Bulba's head flashed before the Jew's eyes; but he was ashamed of his cupidity and strove to quell within him the eternal thought of gold, which, like a worm, twines ever about the Jewish soul.

"Harkee, Yankel!" said Taras to the Jew, who began bowing to him and warily locked the door in order that nobody should

see them together. "I saved your life; the Zaporozhians would have torn you to pieces like a dog; now it is your turn—now you must do me a service."

The Jew's face puckered a little.

"What service? If it is a service I can do you, why shouldn't I?"

"Don't waste time on words. Take me to Warsaw."

"To Warsaw? How so, to Warsaw?" said Yankel. His brows and shoulders rose in amazement.

"Don't waste time on words. Take me to Warsaw. Come what will, I want to see him once more, and speak but one word to him."

"One word to whom?"

"To him, to Ostap, to my son!"

"Does not my lord know that already—"

"I know all. They've offered two thousand ducats for my head. They know its value, the fools! I'll give you five thousand. Here are two thousand now"—Bulba poured out two thousand ducats from a leather purse—"and the rest when I return."

The Jew instantly seized a towel and covered the money with it.

"Oh, what beautiful coins! Oh, good coins!" he said, turning a ducat in his fingers and testing it with his teeth. "Methinks the man whom my lord relieved of these fine ducats did not live an hour longer, but went straight to the river and drowned himself, after losing these beautiful ducats."

"I'd have not asked you; I might, perhaps, have gone to Warsaw alone, but the accursed Poles might recognize and seize me, for I am no good at plotting, and you Jews are made for it. You could cheat the Devil himself; you know every trick—that is why I've come to you! And, besides, in Warsaw, I could do nothing alone. Now go and get your waggon ready, and take me there!"

"And does my lord think that I can go and harness my mare, and cry 'gee up, Grey'? Does my lord think that I can take him just as he is, without hiding him?"

"Well, hide me, hide me as you like! In an empty barrel, perhaps, eh?"

"Oh, oh! And does my lord think that he can be hidden in a barrel? Does my lord not know that everyone will think that there is *horilka* in the barrel?"

"Well, let them think it's *horilka*."

"What! Let them think it is *horilka*?" said the Jew, and clutched his ear-locks with both hands, and then raised them both on high.

"Well, what frightens you now?"

"Why, does my lord not know that God made *horilka* so that every man might drink it? All the men there are fond of dainties, they all have a sweeth tooth; every squire will run for hours after the barrel, bore a hole in it, and will at once see that nothing flows out, and say, 'A Jew would not carry an empty barrel; there must be something amiss here! Seize the Jew, bind the Jew, take all the money from the Jew, away to prison with the Jew!' For all that is ever wrong is blamed on the Jew; for the Jew is taken for a dog by all; for they think he's not even a man if he's a Jew."

"Well, put me in a waggon with fish."

"I cannot, my lord; by heaven, I cannot. In all Poland the people are as hungry as hounds; they'll steal all the fish and discover my lord."

"Well, put me on the devil's back then, but take me there!"

"Hear me! Hear me, my lord!" said the Jew, pulling up his sleeves, and coming up to him with arms outstretched. "Here is what we will do. Fortresses and castles are now being built everywhere. French engineers have come from abroad, and so

a great deal of brick and stone is being carried over the roads. Let my lord lie on the bottom of the waggon, and I'll lay bricks over him. My lord looks hale and hearty, and so no harm will come to him, even if it is a little heavy; and I'll make a hole in the bottom to feed my lord through."

"Do what you will, only take me there!"

An hour after, a waggon loaded with bricks and drawn by two jades left Uman. On one of them sat the tall Yankel, as long as a roadside verst-mark, his long, curly ear-locks waving from beneath his Jewish skull-cap as he bounced up and down on the horse.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

At the time when these events took place, there were as yet no custom-house officials or patrols on the frontiers—the terror of enterprising people—so that anyone could carry across anything he fancied. If anyone happened to make a search or inspection, it was but chiefly for his own pleasure, particularly if the waggon contained anything that excited the eye, and if his own hand possessed a certain weight and power. But the bricks tempted no one and were driven unhindered through the main gates of the city. From his narrow cage Bulba could only hear the noise of the streets and the shouts of the drivers. Bouncing up and down on his short, dusty steed, Yankel turned, after taking care to foul his trail, into a dark alley, which was called Dirty or Jews' Street, by reason of its housing nearly all the Jews of Warsaw. This street was remarkably like a back yard turned wrong side out. The sun never seemed to shine over it. The time-blackened wooden houses and numerous poles projecting from the windows added to the darkness. Here and

there a red brick wall stood out between the houses, but it, too, had already turned black in many places. Rarely did a bit of stuccoed wall gleam with a dazzling whiteness high up in the sunshine. Everything here offended the eye: chimneys, rags, rubbish, discarded pots and pans. Everyone flung into the street whatever was useless to him, abusing with every kind of refuse all the five senses of the passer-by. A man on horseback could almost reach with his hand the poles thrown across the street from one house to another, upon which dangled Jewish stockings, short pantaloons, or a smoked goose. At times, the face of a rather pretty Hebrew girl, adorned with discoloured beads, peeped out of an ancient window. A crowd of Jewish brats, grimy, tattered, and curly-headed, shrieked and rolled in the mud. A red-haired Jew, with a face freckled as a sparrow's egg, looked out of a window and at once began to talk with Yankel in his gibberish; and Yankel drove into a yard. Another Jew, passing along the street, stopped and joined in their talk, and when Bulba finally crawled from under the bricks, he saw all three Jews talking with great animation.

Yankel turned to him and said that all would be done, that his Ostap was in the city gaol, and though it would be difficult to persuade the guards, yet he hoped to arrange a meeting for him.

Bulba went into a room together with the three Jews.

The Jews again began to talk among themselves in their unintelligible language. Taras looked at each of them. Something seemed to have excited him deeply: a powerful flame of hope flashed over his rough and stolid face—of hope such as sometimes visits a man reduced to the highest degree of despair; his old heart beat high, like that of a young man.

"Harkee, ye Jews!" said he, and there was a note of exultation in his voice. "You can do anything, even to digging up the sea-bottom; and it has long been a proverb that the Jew can steal

his own self if he chooses. Set my Ostap free! Help him to escape the devil's hands. To this man I have promised twelve thousand ducats; I will add another twelve thousand. All my costly goblets and buried gold, my house, and my last garment will I give you, and make a compact with you for my whole life to give you half of all I win in war."

"Oh, it cannot be done, sweet sir! it cannot be done!" said Yankel with a sigh.

"No, it cannot be done!" said another Jew.

All three Jews looked at one another.

"And if we try?" said the third, glancing timorously at the other two. "God may help us."

All three Jews began talking in German. No matter how hard Bulba strained his ears, he could make nothing of it; all he heard was the oft-repeated word *Mardohai*.

"Listen, my lord!" said Yankel. "We must consult a man whose like never yet was in the world! Ooh! Ooh! He is as wise as Solomon; and when he cannot do something, nobody on earth can. Sit here; here is the key; let no one in!"

The Jews went out into the street.

Taras locked the door and looked out of the little window upon the dirty Jewish street. The three Jews stopped in the middle of the street and began to talk quite excitedly; they were soon joined by a fourth, and finally by a fifth. He again heard them repeat *Mardohai*, *Mardohai*. The Jews kept looking towards one end of the street, until at last a foot in a Jewish shoe and the skirts of a Jewish coat appeared from behind a ramshackle house at the corner. "Ah, Mardohai! Mardohai!" shouted all the Jews in one voice. A gaunt Jew somewhat shorter than Yankel, but much more wrinkled, and with a huge upper lip, came up to the impatient group; and all the Jews hastened, in eager rivalry, to tell him of their business, while Mardohai glanced several

times at the little window, from which Taras gathered that they were speaking about him. Mardohai waved his hands, listened, interrupted their speech, spat frequently aside, and, raising the skirts of his coat, thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out some trinkets, displaying his foul pantaloons. At length, all the Jews set up such a screaming that the Jew who was standing on guard had to signal to them to be quiet, and Taras began to fear for his safety, but he calmed down when he remembered that Jews can never talk anywhere but in the street and that the Devil himself could not understand their language.

A minute or two later the Jews entered the room all together. Mardohai went up to Bulba, patted him on the shoulder, and said, "When we and God set our minds on doing something, we always have our way."

Taras looked at this Solomon, whose like never yet was in the world, and was filled with new hope. Indeed, the appearance of the Jew inspired a certain amount of confidence: his upper lip was a monster, its thickness being doubtlessly increased by circumstances beyond his control. This Solomon's beard numbered only a dozen odd hairs, and those on the left side only. Solomon's face bore so many traces of blows, occasioned by his doughty deeds, that, in all probability, he had long lost count of them and took them as birthmarks.

Mardohai departed with his companions, who marvelled at his wisdom. Bulba was left alone. He was in a strange, unprecedented situation, and was filled with an anxiety he had never known before. His heart was in a fever. He was no longer the Bulba he had been—unbending, unshakable, strong as an oak; he was fainthearted; he had grown weak. He started at every sound, at the glimpse of every Jewish figure that appeared at the end of the street. In this state he passed the whole day; he neither ate nor drank, and his eyes never left the little window.

At last, at the close of the evening, Mardohai and Yankel appeared. Bulba's heart stopped beating.

"What? Is all well?" demanded he of them, with the impatience of a wild horse.

But even before the Jews could muster enough courage to answer, he noticed that Mardohai had no longer his last temple-lock, which, though ungracefully, had curled from under his skull-cap. It was to be seen that he wished to say something, but instead he burst into such gibberish that Taras could not understand a word. Yankel himself kept clasping his hand to his mouth as if suffering from a cold.

"Oh, sweet sir!" said Yankel. "It cannot be done now! By God, it cannot! They are such bad people that one ought to spit on their very heads! Mardohai will tell you the same. And Mardohai has done what no other man could ever do, but God did not will that we should have our way. Three thousand soldiers are quartered here, and tomorrow the prisoners are all to be put to death."

Taras looked into the Jews' eyes, but no longer with impatience or anger.

"And if my lord would see him, then it must be done early tomorrow, even before sunrise. The guards are willing, and one of the chief wardens has given his promise. Only, may they know no happiness in the next world! Oh, woe is me! What a greedy people they are! Greedier, even, than any of us. I gave fifty ducats to each, and to the chief warden—"

"Good. Take me to him!" Taras broke in resolutely, his heart again as stout as ever.

He agreed to Yankel's suggestion that he should disguise himself as a foreign count, just arrived from Germany, for which purpose the far-sighted Jew had already procured a costume.

It was already night. The master of the house—the red-haired,

freckled Jew—dragged out a thin mattress covered with a bast mat and spread it on a bench for Bulba. Yankel lay upon the floor on another mattress of the same kind. The red-haired Jew drank a small cup of some infusion, took off his coat, and, looking in his shoes and stockings like a chicken, repaired with his Jewess into a kind of cupboard. Two little Jewish children lay on the floor by that cupboard like two house puppies. But Taras did not sleep; he sat motionless and drummed on the table with his fingers; he kept his pipe in his mouth and puffed out smoke, which made Yankel sneeze in his sleep and pull his blanket over his nose. Scarcely was the sky touched with the first pale glimmer of dawn when he pushed Yankel with his foot.

"Get up, Jew, and give me your count's dress!"

He was dressed in a moment; he blackened his mustachios and eyebrows, put a small dark cap on his head—and not even the Cossacks who knew him best would have recognized him. He seemed to be not more than thirty-five years old. A healthy flush glowed on his cheeks, and his scars somehow lent him an imperious air. The dress, adorned with gold, became him perfectly.

The streets were still asleep. Not a single mercantile creature, basket in hand, had yet appeared in the city. Bulba and Yankel came to a building that looked like a sitting stork. It was low, wide, huge, blackened, and on one side of it, craning upwards like a stork's neck, was a long slender turret, on the top of which part of a roof was to be seen. This building served many various purposes: here were barracks, a prison, and even a criminal court. Our travellers entered the gate and found themselves in a roomy hall, or covered courtyard. About a thousand men were sleeping here. Straight before them was a low door, in front of which sat two sentries playing at a game which consisted in one beating the other's palm with two fingers. They paid scant

attention to the newcomers, and turned their heads only when Yankel said, "It's us. D'you hear, sirs? It's us."

"Go in!" said one of them, opening the door with one hand and holding out the other for his comrade to rap.

They stepped into a narrow and dark passage, which led them to a hall like the first, with small windows overhead.

"Who goes there?" shouted several voices, and Taras beheld a large number of soldiers, armed cap-a-pie. "We have orders not to let anyone pass!"

"It's us," shouted Yankel. "By heavens, it's us, noble sirs!"

But no one would listen to him. Fortunately, a stout man came up at that moment, who seemed, by his appearance, to be the chief there, for he swore more lustily than all the others.

"My lord, it's us! You know us already; and his lordship, the count, will thank you once more."

"Let them pass, a hundred devils and Satan's mother! And admit no one else. And do not take off your swords and lie like dogs on the floor. . . ."

The conclusion of this eloquent order our travellers did not hear.

"It's us . . . it's me . . . it's friends!" Yankel kept saying to everyone they met.

"May we go in now?" he asked one of the guards, when they at last reached the end of the passage.

"Yes; but I don't know whether they'll let you pass into the prison itself. Jan is no longer there; another has taken his place."

"Oh, oh!" muttered the Jew softly. "This looks bad, sweet sir!"

"Go on!" said Taras stubbornly.

The Jew obeyed.

At the door of the dungeon, set in a lancet arch, stood a soldier with three-storeyed mustachios: the upper storey went back-

wards, the second straight forward, and the third downwards, which made him greatly resemble a tom-cat.

The Jew hunched his back as much as he could and sidled up to him.

"Your excellency! Most illustrious lord!"

"Do you speak to me, Jew?"

"To you, most illustrious lord!"

"Hm, but I'm nothing but a common soldier!" said the three-storeyed mustachios, his eyes glittering with delight.

"By heavens—I thought it was the voivode himself! Oh, oh!" The Jew wagged his head and spread out his fingers. "Ah, how important he looks! Like a colonel, by heavens! A hair's breadth more, and he would be a colonel! My lord ought to be placed on a horse as swift as a fly, and put in command of regiments!"

The soldier stroked the lower storey of his mustachios, his eyes glittering brighter than ever with delight.

"What fine people the military are!" continued the Jew. "Oh, dear me! what good people! The braid and the trappings—they shine like the sun. And the maidens, wherever they see military men—oh, oh!"

The Jew wagged his head again.

The soldier twirled his upper mustachios and uttered a sound through his teeth much like the neighing of a horse.

"I beg my lord to do us a service," said the Jew. "Here is a prince, come from a foreign land, who wishes to look at the Cossacks. He has never in all his life seen what manner of men are the Cossacks."

Foreign counts and barons were no uncommon thing in Poland; they were often drawn thither by mere curiosity to see this half-Asiatic corner of Europe—they regarded Muscovy and the Ukraine as part of Asia. So the soldier bowed low, and thought fit to say a few words of his own accord.

"I do not know, your excellency," said he, "why you should want to look at them. They are dogs, not men. And their faith is such as no one respects."

"You lie, you devil's son!" said Bulba. "You are a dog yourself. How dare you say that our faith is not respected? It is your heretical faith that is not respected."

"Aha!" said the soldier. "I know who you are, my friend: you yourself are one of those I am guarding here. Wait till I call our men here!"

Taras saw his blunder now; but obstinacy and vexation prevented him from finding a means of repairing it. Fortunately, Yankel came to his rescue at once.

"Most illustrious lord! How is it possible that a count can be a Cossack? And were he a Cossack, where could he have got such a costume and a count's mien?"

"None of your lies now!" And the soldier opened his wide mouth to shout.

"Your royal majesty! Be quiet! be quiet! For heaven's sake!" shouted Yankel. "We'll reward you for it as no one has ever been rewarded: we will give you two gold ducats!"

"Ha! Two ducats! Two ducats are nothing to me: I give my barber two ducats for shaving only half my beard. Give me a hundred ducats, Jew!" Here the soldier twirled his upper mustachios. "If you don't give me a hundred ducats at once, I'll shout out!"

"Why must he have so much!" sorrowfully said the Jew, turning pale; he untied his leather purse, and rejoiced that he had no more there, and that the soldier was unable to count over a hundred.

"My lord, let us go at once! You see what bad people they are here!" said Yankel, noting that the soldier was turning the

money over in his hand with an air of regret at not having demanded more.

"How so? You devil!" said Bulba. "You've taken the money, and will not show me the Cossacks? No, you must show them. You cannot refuse now that you've taken the money."

"Go, go to the devil! If you don't, I'll call out this minute, and you'll— Begone, I tell you!"

"My lord! My lord! In heaven's name, let us go! A plague upon them! May they dream of things that shall make them spit!" shouted poor Yankel.

Bulba turned round slowly, with bent head, and went back, Yankel following him and heaping reproaches upon him, for the Jew was sorely put out by the loss of the wasted ducats.

"Why jump upon him? Why not let the dog scold? They are people who cannot help scolding. Oh, woe is me! What luck God sends to people! A hundred ducats merely for driving us away! And we—they tear off our ear-locks and work on our faces till you cannot bear to look at them, and nobody gives us a hundred ducats! Oh, my God! My merciful God!"

But their failure made a much deeper impression on Bulba, as was shown by a devouring flame in his eyes.

"Let us go!" said he suddenly, as though arousing himself. "Let us go to the square. I want to see how they will torture him."

"Oh, my lord! Why do you wish to go? We cannot help him now."

"We will go!" said Bulba stubbornly.

And, like a nurse, the Jew sighed and dragged himself after him.

The square on which the execution was to take place was not hard to find: crowds of people were thronging thither from all quarters. In that rough age such a sight was an attractive spec-

tacle not only for the rabble, but also for the upper classes. A host of the most pious old women, a host of the most cowardly young maidens and ladies, who would afterwards dream of nothing but bloody corpses all night long and shriek in their sleep as loudly as any drunken hussar, would never miss an opportunity of indulging their curiosity. "Ah, what tortures!" many of them would cry in a hysterical fever, shutting their eyes and turning away, but, nevertheless, they would stand out the show to the end. Some, with gaping mouths and outstretched hands, would have liked to jump upon the heads of those in front of them to get a better view. Among the crowd of narrow, small, and ordinary heads, the fat face of a butcher might be seen, who watched the whole process with the air of a connoisseur and conversed in monosyllables with an armourer, whom he called his foster brother because he used to get drunk with him in the same pot-house on holidays. Some vehemently commented on all they saw, others even laid wagers, but most of the crowd were such as watch the world, and all that happens on earth, stolidly picking their noses.

In the foreground, close to the heavily mustachioed soldiers of the city guard, stood a young gentleman, or one who tried to pass for a gentleman, in a military dress, who had evidently put on the entire contents of his wardrobe, leaving only a torn shirt and a pair of old boots at his quarters. Two chains, one above the other, hung around his neck, supporting something that looked like a ducat. He stood beside his sweetheart, Józysia, and kept glancing about every moment to see that no one soiled her silk dress. He explained everything to her in such minute detail that there was decidedly nothing anyone might have added.

"All these people whom you see here, my darling Józysia," said he, "have come to see the criminals executed. And that man, darling, whom you see there holding an axe and other

instruments in his hands, is the executioner, and he is going to torture them, and put them to death. When he breaks any one of them on the wheel and tortures him in other ways, the criminal will still be alive; but when he cuts off his head, darling, he will die at once. Before that, he will yell and kick; but as soon as his head is chopped off, he will neither yell, nor eat, nor drink, because, darling, he will no longer have any head."

Józysia listened to all this with awe and curiosity.

The house-tops were crowded with people. From the dormer-windows peered strange mustachioed faces, with bonnet-like caps on their heads. On the canopied balconies sat the aristocracy. The lovely hand of a laughing lady, brilliant as white sugar, rested on a railing. Illustrious nobles—stout gentlemen they were—looked on with an air of dignity. A lackey in rich garb, with hanging sleeves, carried round various refreshments. Often, a black-eyed roguish damsel would pick up cake or fruit with her lily hand and fling it into the throng beneath. The crowd of hungry cavaliers held up their caps to catch it, and some tall squire, whose head towered above the others, in a faded red coat with tarnished gold braid, would be the first to seize it with his long arms, kiss his prize, hold it to his heart, and then dispatch it into his mouth. A falcon in a golden cage, hanging under a balcony, was also a spectator; with head bent to one side, and with one foot raised, he, too, looked attentively down at the crowd. Suddenly the crowd became noisier, and voices were heard on all sides, "They are bringing them! They are bringing the Cossacks!"

They came with their long scalp-locks uncovered, their beards unshaven. They came neither timidly nor gloomily, but with a quiet pride; their garments of costly cloth were worn out and hung in tatters; they did not look at nor bow to the crowd. In front of all came Ostap.

What were old Bulba's feelings when he saw his Ostap? What was in his heart? He gazed at him from amidst the crowd and lost not a single movement of his. Ostap halted. He was to drink the bitter cup before any of them. He looked at his comrades, raised his hand, and said loudly, "God grant that the impious heretics, as many as stand here, may not hear a Christian suffer! that none of us may utter a single word!"

After that he stepped up to the scaffold.

"Well said, son! Well said!" said Bulba softly and cast down his grey head.

The executioner tore off Ostap's tatters; his hands and feet were lashed to specially made stocks, and—. But we will not distress the reader by a picture of the hellish tortures, which would make his hair stand on end. They were the outcome of those coarse, savage times, when man still lived a life of bloody military exploits that hardened his soul, which was almost a complete stranger to human feeling. In vain did a few men, who were exceptions in that epoch, oppose these terrible measures. In vain did the king and many knights, enlightened in mind and soul, point out that such cruelty of punishment could but inflame the revengefulness of the Cossack nation. But the power of royalty and of wise counsel was nothing before the lawlessness and arrogant will of the country's magnates, who turned the Diet into a mere satire on government by reason of their thoughtlessness, inconceivable and utter lack of foresight, childish conceit, and petty hauteur.

Ostap bore the torments and tortures like a demigod. Not a cry, not a groan was heard even when they began to break the bones in his arms and legs; when the remotest spectators heard their horrible cracking amidst the deathlike hush that gripped the crowd; when the ladies turned their eyes away. Not a single groan escaped his lips, not a single muscle twitched in his face.

Taras stood in the crowd with bowed head, but his eyes were raised proudly, and he repeated approvingly, "Well done, son! Well done!"

But when they dragged him to the last tortures of death, it seemed as though his strength was giving way. He cast his eyes around. God! Only strange, unknown faces! If only but one dear soul had been here to witness his death! He would not have wished to hear the sobs and sorrow of his weak mother, nor the wild shrieks of a wife tearing her hair and beating her white breasts; he would have wished now to see a firm man, whose wise word might bring him fresh strength and solace in death's hour. And his strength failed him, and he cried in the agony of his soul, "*Batko*! Where are you? Do you hear me?"

"I hear you!" rang through the universal silence, and the million of people there shuddered as one man.

A party of mounted guards rushed to comb the throng. Yankel turned pale as death, and as soon as the horsemen had ridden past him, he looked round in terror for Taras; but Taras was no longer behind him; not a trace of him was left.

CHAPTER TWELVE

But traces of Taras were not lost. A Cossack army of a hundred and twenty thousand men appeared on the borders of the Ukraine. This was no longer a small party or detachment sallying forth for plunder or in pursuit of the Tatars. No: the whole nation had arisen, for the people's patience was at an end. It had arisen to avenge the violation of its rights; the shameful humiliation of its customs; the profanation of the faith of its fathers and its holy rites; the desecration of its churches; the outrages of the foreign lords; its oppression; the Papal Union; the disgraceful

dominion of Jewry on Christian soil—all that had so long nourished and embittered the stern hatred of the Cossacks.

Hetman Ostranitsa, young but strong of heart, was the leader of the numberless Cossack host. Beside him was Gunya, his old and experienced comrade-in-arms and counsellor. Eight colonels led the regiments, each twelve thousand strong. Two general *esauls* and a general standard-bearer rode behind the hetman. The general standard-bearer carried the chief standard; many other standards and banners floated in the distance behind, as well as horse-tails nailed to poles. There were many other officers in the foot and horse regiments: baggage-masters, lieutenants, regimental scriveners; besides the registered Cossacks, there was almost an equal number of volunteers, on foot and on horseback. The Cossacks had risen everywhere; they came from Chigirin and Pereyaslav, from Baturin and Glukhov, from the lower and upper reaches of the Dnieper, and from all its islands. Countless horses and waggons stretched across the fields. And among all these Cossacks, among all the eight regiments, one was the choicest; and that was the regiment led by Taras Bulba. Everything marked him above the others: his ripe years, his experience, his skill in commanding his troops, and his surpassing hatred of the foe. Even the Cossacks thought his ruthless fierceness and cruelty excessive. His grey head adjudged nothing but the stake and gallows, and his counsel at the councils of war breathed nought save extermination.

It would be out of place to describe here all the battles in which the Cossacks showed their prowess, or the progress of the campaign: all this is inscribed on the pages of chronicles. It is well known what a war waged for the faith is like in Russia; there is no power stronger than faith. It is unconquerable and formidable like a rock, made not by human hands, in the midst of a stormy, ever-changing sea. From the deep bed of the sea

it rears its unbreakable, monolithic walls. It is seen from every point, and looks the passing waves straight in the face. And woe to the ship that dashes against it! Her fragile riggings fly in splinters, everything in her is crushed and drowned, and the startled air is rent by the piteous shrieks of her perishing crew.

The pages of the chronicles record in detail how the Polish garrisons fled from the towns freed by the Cossacks; how all the rapacious Jew usurers were hanged; how powerless was the Royal Hetman Mikołaj Potocki with his numerous army against this invincible force; how, routed and pursued, he lost the best part of his army in a wretchedly small stream; how the dreaded Cossack regiments besieged him in the little town of Polonnoye; and how, reduced to the last extremity, the Polish hetman promised, under oath, in the name of the king and his ministers, to satisfy all their demands and to restore all their former rights and privileges. But the Cossacks were not to be taken in by this: they knew the worth of a Polish oath. And Potocki would never more have pranced on his six-thousand-ducat steed, attracting the glances of high-born ladies and the envy of the cavaliers; never more would he have graced the Diet and given sumptuous feasts to the senators—had not the Russian priests of the town saved his life. When all the priests, in their brilliant gold mantles, went out to meet them, bearing the icons and crosses, led by the bishop himself, crosier in hand and a pastoral mitre on his head, all the Cossacks bowed their heads and took off their caps. To no one, not even the king, would they have shown respect at that hour, but they dared not rebel against their own Christian Church, and obeyed their priests. The hetman and his colonels agreed to set Potocki free, having made him solemnly vow to leave all the Christian churches unmolested, to let bygones be bygones, and do no harm to Cossack chivalry. One colonel alone

would not consent to such a peace. It was Taras. He tore a tuft of hair from his head and cried, "Hey, hetman and colonels! Do no such woman's deed! Trust not the Poles: they will betray us, the dogs!"

And when a regimental scrivener presented the terms, and the hetman signed them with his own hand, Taras took off his rich Turkish sabre with a blade of damask steel, broke it in twain like a reed, and flung each half in opposite directions, saying:

"Farewell! As those halves will never meet and make one blade, so we, comrades, shall never again see each other in this world. Remember ye my parting words!" Here his voice swelled and rose higher, ringing with a hitherto unknown power; and all shuddered to hear the prophetic words: "At the hour of your death will you remember me! You think you have bought peace and quiet? you think you will now lord it? Not so: others will lord over you. You, hetman, shall have your head skinned, stuffed with buckwheat bran, and long will it be made a show at every fair. Neither will you, gentlemen, save your heads! You will languish in damp dungeons, behind stone walls, if you are not boiled in cauldrons like sheep! And you, my lads," he went on, turning to his own men, "which of you wants to die a natural death—not wallowing on your stove-ledges or on women's beds, not drunk under a hedge near a pot-house, like carrion, but a true Cossack death—all in one bed, like bride and groom? Or, perhaps, you would like to return home, and turn infidels, and carry Polish priests on your backs?"

"We follow you, Colonel! We follow you!" cried all who were in Bulba's regiment, and many others went over to them.

"If so, then follow me!" said Taras, ramming his cap unto his brows and glaring at those who stayed behind. He settled himself in his saddle and shouted to his men, "May we be

remembered by no unkind word! Come on, lads! We'll pay the Catholics a visit!"

With this he whipped his horse, and there followed him a long train of a hundred waggons, and many Cossacks, horse and foot; and turning, he glared at those who stayed behind, and his eyes were full of wrath. None dared to stop him. The regiment left in sight of the whole army, and long did Taras turn round and glare.

The hetman and the colonels stood downcast; all became thoughtful and were silent for a long time, as though oppressed by gloomy forebodings. Taras had not prophesied in vain: all came to pass as he had prophesied. Very soon, after the betrayal at Kanev, the hetman's head, together with those of many of his chief officers, was stuck up on a pole.

And what of Taras? Taras rode deep into Poland with his regiment, burned eighteen towns and forty Papist churches, and reached Cracow itself. Many nobles did he kill, many of the best and richest castles did he plunder; his Cossacks unsealed and poured out on the ground the century-old wine and mead, carefully stored in lordly cellars; they hacked and burned the costly stuffs, garments, and everything they found in the store-rooms. "Spare nothing!" was all Taras said. No mercy did the Cossacks show to the black-browed ladies, to the white-bosomed, pearly-faced maidens; not even at the altar could they save themselves: Taras burned them, altars and all. More than one pair of snow-white hands were raised to heaven from amidst the fiery flames, with piteous shrieks, which would have moved the cold earth itself and caused the steppe-grass to bend in pity. But the cruel Cossacks paid heed to nothing, and, lifting the infants in the streets on the points of their spears, they threw them also into the flames.

"This is Ostap's funeral feast, you infernal Poles!" was all

Taras said. And such funeral feasts in Ostap's memory he held in every town and village, until the Polish government saw that his acts were more than ordinary robber raids, and the same Potocki, with five regiments, was ordered to capture him without fail.

Six days did the Cossacks successfully evade their pursuers, fleeing along country tracks; though their horses could hardly bear up under the strain of this unusual flight, they almost succeeded in saving them. But this time Potocki was equal to the task entrusted him; unweariedly he pursued them and overtook them on the bank of the Dniester, where Taras had camped for rest in an abandoned and ruined fortress.

On the very brink of a steep cliff above the Dniester loomed its shattered ramparts and crumbling walls. Rubble and broken bricks covered the top of the cliff, which seemed to be ready at any moment to break and hurtle down. Here it was, on its two sides facing the plain, that the Royal Hetman Potocki surrounded Bulba. Four days did the Cossacks fight, repulsing the Poles with bricks and stones. But at last their strength and provisions gave out, and Taras resolved to fight his way through the enemy ranks. And the Cossacks would have fought their way through, and their swift horses might again have served them faithfully, had not Taras halted suddenly, in the very heat of their flight, and shouted, "Wait! I've dropped my pipe. Not even my pipe and tobacco will the infernal Poles have!" And the old ataman stooped down and began to search in the grass for his pipe, his constant companion over land and sea, in his campaigns and at home. Just then a band of soldiers rushed up and seized him by his mighty shoulders. He tried to shake himself free, but no longer as of old did the soldiers fall down around him. "Ah, old age, old age!" he said, and the stout old Cossack wept. But it was not old age at all; simply, the strength of one

man had yielded to the strength of many. Well nigh thirty men clung to his arms and legs. "We've caught our bird!" shrieked the Poles. "Now we must think how to give the dog his due!" With their hetman's leave, they resolved to burn him alive in the sight of all. Near at hand stood the bare trunk of a tree, whose top had been struck off by lightning. They fastened him with iron chains to the trunk and drove nails into his hands; the Cossack was raised on high, so that he might be seen from afar; beneath, they piled faggots. But Taras did not look down on them, nor did he think about the fire with which they were about to burn him; he gazed, poor fellow, in the direction where his Cossacks were firing back at their pursuers; from the height to which he had been lifted, he could see them as clearly as if they were in the palm of his hand.

"Quick, lads, reach that hill!" cried he. "That hill beyond the wood: they will not take you there!"

But the wind did not carry his words to them.

"They're lost! Lost! And all for a trifle!" he said in despair and looked down at the sparkling Dniester.

Joy flashed in his eyes: he saw the prows of four boats projecting out of a clump of bushes. Gathering all the power of his lungs, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"To the bank, lads! To the bank! Take the downhill path on the left! There are boats near the bank—take them all, or they'll chase you!"

This time the wind blew from the other side, and all his words were caught by the Cossacks. But this advice cost him a blow on the head with the back of an axe, which made everything turn over in his eyes.

The Cossacks galloped down the cliff path at full speed, but their pursuers were already treading upon their heels, and they saw that the path twisted and zigzagged, checking their flight.

"Here goes, comrades!" said they; all pulled up for a moment, raised their whips, whistled, and their Tatar horses, springing from the ground, stretched themselves snakelike in the air, flew over the precipice, and plunged into the Dniester. Only two riders failed to reach the river, but crashed down from the height upon the rocks and perished there with their horses without uttering a cry. But the Cossacks were already swimming with the horses and unfastening the boats. The Poles stopped on the brink of the precipice, marvelling at the unheard-of Cossack feat, and uncertain whether to jump down or not. One hot-blooded young colonel, the brother of the beautiful Pole who had bewitched poor Andriy, did not stop to think long, but with might and main leaped with his horse after the Cossacks—only to crash down on the rocks. Torn to pieces by the sharp stones, he perished in the abyss, and his brains, mingled with blood, splashed the bushes that grew on the rough wall of the chasm.

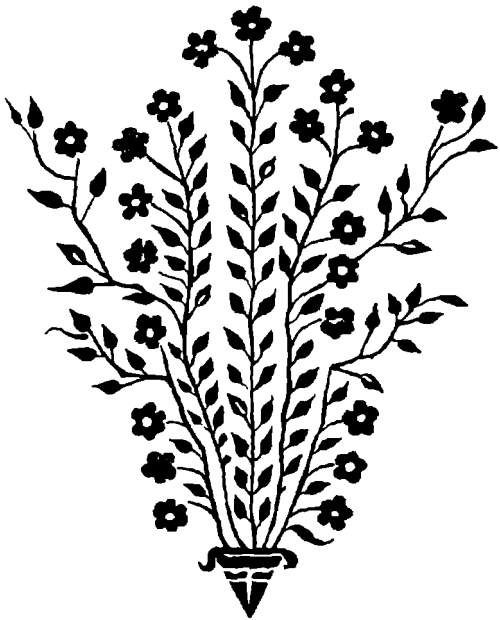
When Taras Bulba recovered from the blow and glanced at the Dniester, the Cossacks were already rowing away in the boats, balls were showered from above, but fell short of them. And the old ataman's eyes sparkled with joy.

"Fare ye well, comrades!" he called to them from above. "Remember me, and come hither again next spring for another glorious raid! How now, you infernal Poles? Think ye there is aught in the world that can daunt a Cossack? Wait! The day will come when you shall learn what the Orthodox Russian is! Already do peoples far and near forebode it: there shall arise a ruler from Russian soil, and there shall be no power on earth that shall not yield to him!"

The flames rose from the faggots, gripping his feet and running up the tree.... But what fire, what torture, what power can be found on earth that can overpower Russian power!

The Dniester is no small river, and many are its backwaters,

dense rushes, shallows, and deep holes. Its mirror-like surface glitters, and over it ring the cries of the swan, and the proud river-duck glides swiftly over it, and many are the snipe and red-throated ruffs and other birds that hide in its reeds and along its banks. The Cossacks rowed on, swiftly and steadily, in their narrow double-ruddered boats, steering clear of the shoals, startling the birds. They rowed on and talked of their ataman.



PART TWO

VIY*

As soon as the rather musical seminary bell which hung at the gate of the Bratsky Monastery rang out every morning in Kiev, schoolboys and students hurried thither in crowds from all parts of the town. Students of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and theology trudged to their class-rooms with exercise-books under their arms. The grammarians were quite small boys; they shoved each other as they went

* *Viy* (pronounced vee-y) is a colossal creation of the folk imagination. It is the name among the Ukrainians of the chief of the gnomes, whose eyelids droop down to the earth. This whole story is a folk tradition. I was unwilling to change it, and I tell it almost in those simple words in which I heard it.—*Author's Note.*

along and quarrelled in shrill altos; almost all wore muddy or tattered clothes, and their pockets were full of all manner of rubbish, such as knucklebones, whistles made of feathers, or a half-eaten pie, sometimes even little sparrows, one of whom suddenly chirruping at an exceptionally quiet moment in the class-room would cost its owner some resounding whacks on both hands and sometimes a thrashing. The rhetoricians walked with more dignity; their clothes were often quite free from holes; on the other hand, their countenances almost all bore some decoration, after the style of a figure of rhetoric: either one eye had sunk right under the forehead, or there was a monstrous swelling in place of a lip, or some other disfigurement. They talked and swore among themselves in tenor voices. The philosophers conversed an octave lower in the scale; they had nothing in their pockets but strong, cheap tobacco. They laid in no stores of any sort, but ate on the spot anything they came across; they smelt of pipes and *horilka* to such a distance that a passing workman would sometimes stop a long way off and sniff the air like a setter dog.

As a rule the market was just beginning to stir at that hour, and the women with bread-rings, rolls, melon seeds, and poppy cakes would tug at the skirts of those whose coats were of fine cloth or some cotton material.

"This way, young gentlemen, this way!" they kept saying from all sides, "here are bread-rings, poppy cakes, twists, tasty white rolls; they are really good! Made with honey! I baked them myself."

Another woman lifting up a sort of long twist made of dough would cry, "Here's a bread stick! Buy my bread stick, young gentlemen!"

"Don't buy anything off her; see what a horrid woman she is, her nose is nasty and her hands are dirty...."

But the women were afraid to worry the philosophers and the theologians, for they were fond of taking things to taste and always a good handful.

On reaching the seminary, the crowd dispersed to their various classes, which were held in low-pitched but fairly large rooms, with little windows, wide doorways, and dirty benches. The class-room was at once filled with all sorts of buzzing sounds: the "auditors" heard their pupils repeat their lessons; the shrill alto of a grammarian rang out, and the window-panes responded with almost the same note; in a corner a rhetorician, whose stature and thick lips should have belonged at least to a student of philosophy, was droning something in a bass voice, and all that could be heard at a distance was, "Boo, boo, boo...." The "auditors," as they heard the lesson, kept glancing with one eye under the bench, where a roll or a cheese cake or some pumpkin seeds were peeping out of a scholar's pocket.

When this learned crowd managed to arrive a little too early, or when they knew that the professors would be later than usual, then by general consent they got up a fight, and everyone had to take part in it, even the monitors whose duty it was to maintain discipline and look after the morals of all the students. Two theologians usually settled the arrangements for the battle: whether each class was to defend itself individually, or whether all were to be divided into two parties, the bursars and the seminarists. In any case the grammarians launched the attack, and as soon as the rhetoricians entered the fray, they ran away and stood at points of vantage to watch the contest. Then the devotees of philosophy, with long black moustaches, joined in, and finally those of theology, very thick in the neck and attired in enormous trousers, took part. It commonly ended in theology beating all the rest, and the philosophers, rubbing their ribs, were forced into the class-room and sat down on the benches

to rest. The professor, who had himself at one time taken part in such battles, could, on entering the class, see in a minute from the flushed faces of his audience that the battle had been a good one, and while he was caning rhetorics on the fingers, in another class-room another professor would be smacking philosophy's hands with a wooden bat. The theologians were dealt with in quite a different way: they received, to use the expression of a professor of theology, "a peck of peas a piece," in other words, a liberal drubbing with short leather thongs.

On holidays and ceremonial occasions the bursars and the seminarists went from house to house as mummers. Sometimes they acted a play, and then the most distinguished figure was always some theologian, almost as tall as the belfry of Kiev, who took the part of Herodias or Potiphar's wife. They received in payment a piece of linen, or a sack of millet, or half a boiled goose, or something of the sort. All this crowd of students—the seminarists as well as the bursars, with whom they maintain an hereditary feud—were exceedingly badly off for means of subsistence, and at the same time had extraordinary appetites, so that to reckon how many dumplings each of them tucked away at supper would be utterly impossible, and therefore the voluntary offerings of prosperous citizens could not be sufficient for them. Then the "senate" of the philosophers and theologians dispatched the grammarians and rhetoricians, under the supervision of a philosopher (and sometimes took part in the raid themselves), with sacks on their shoulders to plunder the kitchen gardens—and pumpkin porridge was made in the bursars' quarters. The members of the "senate" ate such masses of melons that next day their "auditors" heard two lessons from them instead of one, one coming from their lips, another muttering in their stomachs. Both the bursars and the seminarists

wore long garments resembling frock-coats, "prolonged to the utmost limit," a technical expression signifying below their heels.

The most important event for the seminarists was the coming of the vacation; it began in June, when they usually dispersed to their homes. Then the whole highroad was dotted with philosophers, grammarians and theologians. Those who had nowhere to go went to stay with some comrade. The philosophers and theologians took a situation, that is, undertook the tuition of the children in prosperous families, and received in payment a pair of new boots or sometimes even a coat. The whole crowd trailed along together like a gipsy encampment, boiled their porridge, and slept in the fields. Everyone hauled along a sack in which he had a shirt and a pair of leg-wrappers. The theologians were particularly thrifty and precise: to avoid wearing out their boots, they took them off, hung them on sticks and carried them on their shoulders, especially if the road was muddy; then, tucking their trousers up above their knees, they splashed fearlessly through the puddles. When they saw a village they turned off the high road and, going up to any house which seemed a little better looking than the rest, stood in a row before the windows and began singing a chant at the top of their voices. The master of the house, some old Cossack villager, would listen to them for a long time, his head propped on his hands, then he would sob bitterly and say, turning to his wife: "Wife! What the scholars are singing must be very deep; bring them fat bacon and anything else that we have." And a whole bowl of dumplings was emptied into the sack, a good-sized piece of bacon, several flat loaves, and sometimes a trussed hen would go into it too. Fortified with such stores, the grammarians, rhetoricians, philosophers and theologians went on their way again. Their numbers lessened,

however, the farther they went. Almost all wandered off towards their homes, and only those were left whose parental abodes were farther away.

Once, at the time of such a migration, three students turned off the high road in order to replenish their store of provisions at the first homestead they could find, for their sacks had long been empty. They were the theologian, Khalyava; the philosopher, Khoma Brut; and the rhetorician, Tibery Gorobets.

The theologian was a well-grown, broad-shouldered fellow; he had an extremely odd habit—anything that lay within his reach he invariably stole. In other circumstances, he was of an excessively gloomy temper, and when he was drunk he used to hide in the tall weeds, and the seminarists had a lot of trouble to find him there.

The philosopher, Khoma Brut, was of a cheerful disposition, he was very fond of lying on his back and smoking a pipe; when he was drinking he always engaged musicians and danced the *trepak*. He often had a taste of the "peck of peas," but took it with perfect philosophical indifference, saying that there is no escaping from the inevitable. The rhetorician, Tibery Gorobets, had not yet the right to wear a moustache, to drink *horilka*, and to smoke a pipe. He only wore a forelock round his ear, and so his character was as yet hardly formed; but, judging from the big bumps on the forehead, with which he often appeared in class, it might be presumed that he would make a good fighter. The theologian, Khalyava, and the philosopher, Khoma, often pulled him by the forelock as a sign of their favour, and employed him as their messenger.

It was evening when they turned off the high road; the sun had only just set and the warmth of the day still lingered in the air. The theologian and the philosopher walked along in silence smoking their pipes; the rhetorician, Tibery Gorobets, kept

knocking off the heads of the wayside thistles with his stick. The road weaved in between the scattered groups of oak- and nut-trees standing here and there in the meadows. Sloping uplands and little hills, green and round as cupolas, were interspersed here and there about the plain. The cornfields of ripening wheat, which came into view in two places, were the evidence that they were nearing some village. More than an hour passed, however, since they had seen the cornfields, yet there were no dwellings in sight. The sky was now completely wrapped in darkness, and only in the west there was a pale streak left of the glow of sunset.

"What the devil does it mean?" said the philosopher, Khoma Brut. "It looked as though there must be a village in a minute."

The theologian did not speak, he gazed at the surrounding country, then put his pipe back in his mouth, and they continued on their way.

"Upon my soul!" the philosopher said, stopping again, "not a devil's fist to be seen."

"Maybe some village will turn up farther on," said the theologian, not removing his pipe.

But meantime night had come on, and a rather dark night. Small clouds increased the gloom, and by every token they could expect neither stars nor moon. The students noticed that they had lost their way and for a long time had been walking off the road.

The philosopher, after feeling the ground about him with his feet in all directions, said at last, abruptly, "I say, where's the road?"

The theologian did not speak for a while, then after pondering he brought out, "Yes, it is a dark night."

The rhetorician walked off to one side and tried on his hands and knees to grope for the road, but his hands came upon nothing

but foxes' holes. On all sides of them there was the steppe, which, it seemed, no one had ever crossed.

The travellers made another effort to press on a little, but there was the same wilderness in all directions. The philosopher tried shouting, but his voice seemed completely lost on the steppe, and met with no reply. All they heard was, a little afterwards, a faint moaning like the howl of a wolf.

"I say, what's to be done?" said the philosopher.

"Why, halt and sleep in the open!" said the theologian, and he felt in his pocket for flint and tinder to light his pipe again. But the philosopher could not agree to this: it was always his habit at night to put away a quartern-loaf of bread and four pounds of fat bacon, and he was conscious on this occasion of an insufferable sense of loneliness in his stomach. Besides, in spite of his cheerful temper, the philosopher was rather afraid of wolves.

"No, Khalyava, we can't," he said. "What, stretch out and lie down like a dog, without a bite or a sup of anything? Let's make another try for it; maybe we shall stumble on some dwelling-place and get at least a drink of *horilka* for supper."

At the word "*horilka*" the theologian spat to one side and brought out, "Well, of course, it's no use staying in the open."

The students pushed on, and to their intense delight soon caught the sound of barking in the distance. After listening which direction it came from, they walked on more boldly and a little later saw a light.

"A farm! It really is a farm!" said the philosopher.

He was not mistaken in his supposition; in a little while they actually saw a little homestead consisting of only two cottages looking into the same farmyard. There was a light in the windows; a dozen plum-trees stood up by the fence. Looking through

the cracks in the paling-gate the students saw a yard filled with carriers' waggons. Here and there the stars peeped out in the sky.

"Look, mates, don't let's be put off! We must get a night's lodging somehow!"

The three learned gentlemen banged on the gates with one accord and shouted, "Open up!"

The door of one of the cottages creaked, and a minute later they saw before them an old woman in a sheepskin.

"Who is there?" she cried, with a hollow cough.

"Give us a night's lodging, Granny; we have lost our way; a night in the open is as bad as a hungry belly."

"What manner of folks may you be?"

"We're harmless folks: Khalyava, a theologian; Brut, a philosopher; and Gorobets, a rhetorician."

"I can't," grumbled the old woman. "The yard is crowded with folk and every corner in the cottage is full. Where am I to put you? And such great hulking fellows, too! Why, my cottage will fall to pieces if I put such fellows in it. I know these philosophers and theologians; if one began taking in these drunken fellows, there'd soon be no home left. Be off, be off! There's no place for you here!"

"Have pity on us, Granny! How can you let Christian souls perish for no rhyme or reason? Put us where you please; and if we do aught amiss or anything else, may our arms be withered, and God only knows what befall us—so there!"

The old woman seemed somewhat softened.

"Very well," she said as though reconsidering, "I'll let you in, but I'll put you up all in different places, for my mind won't be at rest if you are all together."

"That's as you please; we'll make no objection," answered the students.

The gate creaked and they went into the yard.

"Well, Granny," said the philosopher, following the old woman, "how would it be, as they say ... upon my soul, I feel as though somebody were driving a cart in my stomach: not a morsel has passed my lips all day."

"What next will he want!" said the old woman. "No, I've nothing for you, and the oven's not been heated today."

"But we'd pay for it all," the philosopher went on, "tomorrow morning, in hard cash. Yes!" he added in an undertone. "The devil a bit you'll get!"

"Go in, go in! and be satisfied with what you're given. Fine young gentlemen the devil has brought us!"

Khoma the philosopher was thrown into utter dejection by these words; but his nose suddenly aware of the odour of dried fish, he glanced at the trousers of the theologian who was walking at his side, and saw a huge fish-tail sticking out of his pocket. The theologian had already succeeded in filching a whole crucian from a waggon. And as he had done this simply from habit, and, quite forgetting his crucian, was already looking about for anything else he could carry off, having no mind to miss even a broken wheel, the philosopher slipped his hand into his friend's pocket, as though it were his own, and pulled out the crucian.

The old woman put the students in their separate places: the rhetorician she kept in the cottage, the theologian she locked in an empty closet, the philosopher she assigned a sheep-pen, also empty.

The latter, on finding himself alone, instantly devoured the crucian, examined the hurdle walls of the pen, kicked an inquisitive pig that woke up and thrust its snout in from the next pen, and turned over on his right side to fall into a sound sleep. All of a sudden the low door opened, and the old woman bending down stepped into the pen.

"What is it, Granny, what do you want?" said the philosopher.

But the old woman came towards him with outstretched arms.

"Aha, ha!" thought the philosopher. "No, my dear, you are too old!"

He moved a little aside, but the old woman unceremoniously approached him again.

"Listen, Granny!" said the philosopher. "It's a fast time now; and I am a man who wouldn't sin in a fast for a thousand golden pieces."

But the old woman spread her arms and tried to catch him without saying a word.

The philosopher was frightened, especially when he noticed a strange glitter in her eyes. "Granny, what is it? Go—go away—God bless you!" he cried.

The old woman tried to clutch him in her arms without uttering a word.

He leapt to his feet, intending to escape; but the old woman stood in the doorway, fixed her glittering eyes on him and again began approaching him.

The philosopher tried to push her back with his hands, but to his surprise found that his arms would not rise, his legs would not move, and he perceived with horror that even his voice would not obey him; words hovered on his lips without a sound. He heard nothing but the beating of his heart. He saw the old woman approach him. She folded his arms, bent his head down, leapt with the swiftness of a cat upon his back, and struck him with a broom on the side; and he, prancing like a horse, carried her on his shoulders. All this happened so quickly that the philosopher scarcely knew what he was doing. He clutched his knees in both hands, trying to stop his legs from moving, but to his extreme amazement they were lifted against his will and executed

capers more swiftly than a Circassian racer. Only when they had left the farm, and the wide plain lay stretched before them with a forest black as coal on one side, he said to himself, "Aha! she's a witch!"

The waning crescent of the moon was shining in the sky. The timid radiance of midnight lay mistily over the earth, light as a transparent veil. The forests, the meadows, the sky, the dales, all seemed as though slumbering with open eyes; not a breeze fluttered anywhere; there was a damp warmth in the freshness of the night; the shadows of the trees and bushes fell on the sloping plain in pointed wedge shapes like comets. Such was the night when Khoma Brut, the philosopher, set off galloping with a mysterious rider on his back. He was aware of an exhausting, unpleasant, and at the same time voluptuous sensation assailing his heart. He bent his head and saw that the grass which had been almost under his feet seemed growing at a depth far away, and that above it there lay water, transparent as a mountain stream, and the grass seemed to be at the bottom of a clear sea, limpid to its very depths; anyway, he saw clearly in it his own reflection with the old woman sitting on his back. He saw shining there a sun instead of the moon; he heard the bluebells ringing as they bent their little heads; he saw a water-nymph float out from behind the reeds, there was the gleam of her leg and back, rounded and supple, all brightness and shimmering. She turned towards him and now her face came nearer, with eyes clear, sparkling, keen, with singing that pierced to the heart; now it was on the surface, and shaking with sparkling laughter it moved away; and now she turned on her back, and her cloud-like breasts, milk-white like faience, gleamed in the sun at the edges of their white, soft and supple roundness. Little bubbles of water like beads bedewed them. She was all quivering and laughing in the water....

Did he see this or did he not? Was he awake or dreaming? But what was that? The wind or music? It is ringing and ringing and eddying and coming closer and piercing to his heart with an insufferable thrill....

"What does it mean?" the philosopher wondered, looking down as he flew along full speed. He was bathed in sweat, and aware of a fiendishly voluptuous feeling, he felt a stabbing, exhaustingly terrible delight. It often seemed to him as though his heart had melted away, and with terror he clutched at it. Worn out, desperate, he began trying to recall all the prayers he knew. He went through all the exorcisms against evil spirits, and all at once felt somewhat refreshed; he felt that his step was growing slower, the witch's hold upon his back seemed feebler, thick grass brushed him, and now he saw nothing extraordinary in it. The clear crescent moon was shining in the sky.

"Good!" the philosopher Khoma thought to himself, and he began repeating the exorcisms almost aloud. At last, quick as lightning, he sprang from under the old woman and in his turn leapt on her back. The old woman, with a tiny tripping step, ran so fast that her rider could scarcely breathe. The earth flashed by under him; everything was clear in the moonlight, though the moon was not full; the ground was smooth, but everything flashed by so rapidly that it was confused and indistinct. He snatched up a piece of wood that lay on the road and began whacking the old woman with all his might. She uttered wild howls; at first they were angry and menacing, then they grew fainter, sweeter, clearer, then rang out gently like delicate silver bells that stabbed him to the heart; and the thought flashed through his mind: was it really an old woman?

"Oh, I'm done in!" she murmured, and sank exhausted to the ground.

He stood up and looked into her face (there was the glow of sunrise, and the golden domes of the Kiev churches were gleaming in the distance): before him lay a lovely creature with luxuriant tresses all in disorder and eyelashes as long as arrows. Senseless she tossed her bare white arms and moaned, looking upwards with eyes full of tears.

Khoma trembled like a leaf on a tree; he was overcome by pity and a strange emotion and timidity, feelings he could not himself explain. He set off running full speed. His heart throbbed uneasily, and he could not account for the strange new feeling that had taken possession of him. He did not want to go back to the farm; he hastened to Kiev, pondering all the way on this incomprehensible adventure.

There was scarcely a student left in the town. All had scattered about the countryside, either to situations or simply without them, because in the villages of the Ukraine they could get cheese cakes, cheese, sour cream, and dumplings as big as a hat without paying a kopek for them. The big rambling house in which the students were lodged was absolutely empty, and although the philosopher rummaged in every corner and even felt in all the holes and cracks in the roof, he could not find a bit of bacon or even a stale roll such as were commonly hidden there by the students.

The philosopher, however, soon found means to improve his lot: he walked whistling three times through the market, finally winked at a young widow in a yellow bonnet who was selling ribbons, shot and wheels, and was that very day regaled with wheat dumplings, a chicken... in short, there is no telling what was on the table laid for him in a little hut in the middle of a cherry orchard.

That same evening the philosopher was seen in a pot-house; he was lying on the bench, smoking a pipe as his habit was, and

in the sight of all he flung the Jew who kept the house a gold coin. A mug stood before him. He looked at the people that came in and went out with eyes full of quiet satisfaction, and thought no more of his extraordinary adventure.

Meanwhile rumours were circulating everywhere that the daughter of one of the richest Cossack *sotniks*,* who lived nearly fifty versts from Kiev, had returned one day from a walk terribly injured, hardly able to crawl home to her father's house, was on the verge of death, and had expressed a wish that one of the Kiev seminarists, Khoma Brut, should read the prayers over her and the psalms for three days after her death. The philosopher heard of this from the rector himself, who summoned him to his room and informed him that he was to set off on the journey without any delay, that the noble *sotnik* had sent servants and a carriage to fetch him.

The philosopher shuddered from an unaccountable feeling which he could not have explained to himself. A dark presentiment told him that something evil was awaiting him. Without knowing why, he bluntly declared that he would not go.

"Listen, Domine Khoma!" said the rector. (On some occasions he expressed himself very courteously with those under his authority.) "Who the devil is asking you whether you want to go or not? All I have to tell you is that if you go on jibbing and making difficulties, I'll order you a good flogging on your back and the rest of you."

The philosopher, scratching behind his ear, went out without uttering a word, proposing at the first suitable opportunity to put his trust in his heels. Plunged in thought he went down the steep staircase that led into a yard shut in by

* An officer in command of a company of Cossacks, consisting originally of a hundred, but in later times of a larger number.—*Tr.*

poplars, and stood still for a minute, hearing quite distinctly the voice of the rector giving orders to his butler and someone else—probably one of the servants sent to fetch him by the *sotnik*.

"Thank his honour for the grain and the eggs," the rector was saying, "and tell him that as soon as the books about which he writes are ready, I will send them at once, I have already given them to a scribe to be copied, and don't forget, my good man, to mention to his honour that I know there are excellent fish at his place, especially sturgeon, and he might on occasion send some; here in the market it's bad and dear. And you, Yavtukh, give the young fellows a cup of *horilka* each, and bind the philosopher or he'll be off directly."

"There, the devil's son!" the philosopher thought to himself. "He scented it out, the wily long-legs!"

He went into the yard and saw a covered chaise, which he almost took at first for a baker's oven on wheels. It was, indeed, as deep as the oven in which bricks are baked. But it was only the ordinary Cracow carriage in which Jews travel fifty together with their wares to all the towns where they smell out a fair. Six healthy and stalwart Cossacks, no longer young, were waiting for him. Their tunics of fine cloth, with tassels, showed that they belonged to a rather important and wealthy master; some small scars proved that they had at some time been in battle, not ingloriously.

"What's to be done? Come what may!" the philosopher thought to himself, and turning to the Cossacks, he said aloud, "Good day to you, comrades!"

"Good health to you, master philosopher," some of the Cossacks replied.

"So I am to get in with you? It's a goodly chaise!" he went

on, as he clambered in. "We need only hire some musicians and we might dance here."

"Yes, it's a carriage of ample proportions," said one of the Cossacks, seating himself on the box beside the coachman, who had tied a rag over his head to replace the cap which he had managed to leave behind at a pot-house. The other five and the philosopher crawled into the recesses of the chaise and settled themselves on sacks filled with various purchases they had made in the town. "It would be interesting to know," said the philosopher, "if this chaise were loaded up with goods of some sort, salt, for instance, or iron wedges, how many horses would be needed then?"

"Yes," the Cossack sitting on the box said after a pause, "it would need a sufficient number of horses."

After this satisfactory reply the Cossack thought himself entitled to hold his tongue for the remainder of the journey.

The philosopher was extremely desirous of learning more in detail who this *sotnik* was, what he was like, what had been heard about his daughter who in such a strange way returned home and was on the point of death, and whose fate was now connected with his own, what was being done in the house, and how things were there. He addressed the Cossacks with inquiries, but no doubt they too were philosophers, for by way of reply they remained silent, smoking their pipes and lying on the sacks. Only one of them turned to the driver on the box with a brief order, "Mind, Overko, you old booby, when you are near the pot-house on the Chukhraylovo road, don't forget to stop and wake me and the other chaps, if any should chance to drop asleep."

After this he fell asleep rather audibly. These instructions were, however, quite unnecessary, for as soon as the gigantic

chaise drew near the pot-house, all the Cossacks with one voice shouted, "Stop!" Moreover, Overko's horses were already trained to stop of themselves at every pot-house.

In spite of the hot July day, they all got out of the chaise and went into the low-pitched dirty room, where the Jew who kept the house hastened to receive his old friends with every sign of delight. The Jew brought under the skirt of his coat some pork sausages and, putting them on the table, turned his back at once on this food forbidden by the Talmud. All the Cossacks sat down round the table; earthenware mugs were set for each of the guests. Khoma had to take part in the general festivity, and, as Ukrainians infallibly begin kissing each other or weeping when they are drunk, soon the whole room resounded with smacks. "I say, Spirid, a kiss." "Come here, Dorosh, I want to embrace you!"

One Cossack with grey moustache, a little older than the rest, propped his cheek on his hand and began sobbing bitterly at the thought that he had neither father nor mother and was all alone in the world. Another one, much given to moralizing, persisted in consoling him, saying, "Don't cry; upon my soul, don't cry! Nothing could be done now.... The Lord knows best, you know."

The one whose name was Dorosh became extremely inquisitive and, turning to the philosopher Khoma, kept asking him, "I should like to know what they teach you in the Seminary. Is it the same as what the deacon reads in church, or something different?"

"Don't ask!" the sermonizing Cossack said emphatically. "Let it be as it is, God alone knows everything."

"No, I want to know," said Dorosh, "what is written there in those books. Maybe it is quite different from what the deacon reads."

"Oh, my goodness, my goodness!" said the sermonizing worthy. "And why say such a thing, it's as the Lord wills. There is no changing what the Lord has willed!"

"I want to know all that's written. I'll go to the Seminary, upon my word, I will. Do you suppose I can't learn? I'll learn it all, all!"

"Oh, my goodness!..." said the sermonizing Cossack, and he dropped his head on the table, because he was utterly incapable of supporting it any longer on his shoulders. The other Cossacks were discussing their masters and the question why the moon shone in the sky. The philosopher, seeing the state of their minds, resolved to seize his opportunity and make his escape. To begin with he turned to the grey-headed Cossack who was grieving for his father and mother.

"Don't cry, Uncle!" he said. "I am an orphan myself! Let me go, lads! What do you want with me?"

"Let him go!" several responded. "Why, he is an orphan, let him go where he likes."

"Oh, my goodness, my goodness!" the moralizing Cossack articulated, lifting his head. "Let him go!" "Let him go where he likes!"

And the Cossacks meant to lead him out of the yard themselves, but the one who had displayed his curiosity stopped them, saying: "Don't touch him. I want to talk to him about the Seminary. I am going to the Seminary myself...."

It is doubtful, however, whether the escape could have taken place, for when the philosopher tried to get up from the table his legs seemed to have become wooden, and he began to perceive such a number of doors in the room that he could hardly discover the real one.

It was evening before the Cossacks bethought themselves that they had farther to go. Clambering into the chaise, they

trailed along the road, urging on the horses and singing a song of which nobody could have made out the words or the sense. After trundling on for the greater part of the night, continually straying off the road, though they knew every inch of the way, they drove at last down a steep hill into a valley, and the philosopher noticed a paling or hurdle that ran alongside, low trees and roofs peeping out behind it. This was a big village belonging to the *sotnik*. By now it was long past midnight; the sky was dark, with only little stars twinkling here and there. No light was to be seen anywhere. To the accompaniment of the barking of dogs, they drove into the courtyard. Thatched barns and little houses came into sight on both sides; one of the latter, which stood exactly in the middle opposite the gates, was larger than the others, and was apparently the *sotnik*'s residence. The chaise drew up before a little shed which looked like a barn, and our travellers went off to bed. The philosopher, however, wanted to inspect the outside of the *sotnik*'s house; but though he stared his hardest, he could see nothing; the house looked to him like a bear; the chimney turned into the rector. The philosopher gave it up and went to sleep.

When he woke up, the whole house was in commotion: the *sotnik*'s daughter had died in the night. Servants were running hurriedly to and fro; some old women were crying; an inquisitive crowd was looking through the fence at the house, as though something might be seen there. The philosopher began examining at his leisure the objects he could not make out in the night. The *sotnik*'s house was a little, low-pitched building, such as was usual in the Ukraine in old days; its roof was of thatch; a small, high, pointed gable with a little window that looked like an eye turned upwards, was painted in blue and yellow flowers and red crescents; it was supported on oak posts, rounded above and hexagonal below, with carving at the top. Under

this gable was a little porch with seats on each side. There were verandahs round the house resting on similar posts, some of them carved in spirals. A tall pear-tree with pyramidal top and trembling leaves made a patch of green in front of the house. Two rows of barns stood in the middle of the yard, forming a sort of wide lane leading to the house. Beyond the barns, close to the gate, stood facing each other two three-cornered storehouses, also thatched. Each triangular wall was painted in various designs and had a little door. On one of them was depicted a Cossack sitting on a barrel, holding a mug above his head with the inscription: "I'll drink it all!" On the other, there were bottles, flagons, and at the sides, by way of ornament, a horse upside down, a pipe, a tambourine, and the inscription: "Wine is the Cossack's comfort!" A drum and brass trumpets could be seen through the huge window in the loft of one of the barns. At the gates stood two cannons. Everything showed that the master of the house was fond of merry-making, and that the yard often resounded with the shouts of revellers. There were two windmills outside the gate. Behind the house stretched orchards, and through the tree-tops the dark caps of chimneys were all that could be seen of cottages smothered in green bushes. The whole village lay on the broad sloping side of a hill. The steep side, at the very foot of which lay the courtyard, made a screen from the north. Looked at from below, it seemed even steeper, and here and there on its tall top uneven stalks of weeds stood up black against the clear sky; its bare aspect was somehow depressing; its clay soil was hollowed out by the fall and trickle of rain. Two cottages stood at some distance from each other on its steep slope. One of them was overshadowed by the branches of a spreading apple-tree, banked up with soil and supported by short stakes near the root. The apples, knocked down by the wind, were

falling right into the master's courtyard. The road, winding about the hill from the very top, ran down beside the courtyard to the village. When the philosopher scanned its terrific steepness and recalled their journey down it the previous night, he came to the conclusion that either the *sotnik* had very clever horses or the Cossacks had very strong heads to have managed, even when drunk, to escape flying head over heels with the immense chaise and baggage. The philosopher was standing on the very highest point in the yard. When he turned and looked in the opposite direction he saw quite a different view. The village sloped away into a plain. Meadows stretched as far as the eye could see; their brilliant verdure was deeper in the distance, and whole rows of villages looked like dark patches in it, though they must have been more than twenty versts away. On the right of the meadow-fields was a line of hills, and a hardly perceptible streak of flashing light and darkness showed where the Dnieper ran.

"Ah, a splendid spot!" said the philosopher. "This would be the place to live, fishing in the Dnieper and the ponds, bird-catching with nets, or shooting king-snipe and curlew. Though I do believe there would be a few bustards too in those meadows! One could dry lots of fruit, too, and sell it in the town or, better still, make vodka of it, for there's no drink to compare with fruit-vodka. But it would be just as well to consider how to slip away from here."

He noticed outside the fence a little path completely overgrown with weeds; he was mechanically setting his foot on it with the idea of simply going first out for a walk, and then stealthily passing between the cottages and dashing out into the open country, when he suddenly felt a rather strong hand on his shoulder.

Behind him stood the old Cossack who had on the previous

evening so bitterly bewailed the death of his father and mother and his own solitary state.

"It's no good your thinking of making off, Mr. Philosopher!" he said. "This isn't the sort of establishment you can run away from; and the roads are bad, too, for anyone on foot; you had better come to the master; he's been expecting you this long time inside."

"Let us go! To be sure . . . I'm delighted," said the philosopher, and followed the Cossack.

The *sotnik*, an elderly man with grey moustache and an expression of gloomy sadness, was sitting at a table in the best room, his head propped on his hands. He was about fifty; but the deep despondency on his face and its wan pallor showed that his soul had been crushed and shattered at one blow, and all his old gaiety and noisy merry-making had gone for ever. When Khoma entered with the old Cossack, he took one hand from his face and gave a slight nod in response to their low bows.

Khoma and the Cossack stood respectfully at the door.

"Who are you, where do you come from, and what is your calling, good man?" said the *sotnik*, in a voice neither friendly nor ill-humoured.

"A bursar, student in philosophy, Khoma Brut. . . ."

"Who was your father?"

"I don't know, honoured sir."

"Your mother?"

"I don't know my mother either. It is reasonable to suppose, of course, that I had a mother; but who she was and where she came from and when she lived—upon my soul, good sir, I don't know."

The old man paused and seemed to sink into a reverie for a minute.

"How did you come to know my daughter?"

"I didn't know her, honoured sir, upon my word, I didn't. I have never had anything to do with young ladies, never in my life. Bless them, saving your presence!"

"Why did she fix on you and no other to read the psalms over her?"

The philosopher shrugged his shoulders. "God knows how to make that out. It's a well-known thing, the gentry are for ever taking fancies that the most learned man couldn't explain, and the proverb says: 'The devil himself must dance at the master's bidding.'"

"Are you telling the truth, philosopher?"

"May I be struck down by thunder on the spot if I'm not."

"If you had but lived one brief moment longer," the *sotnik* said to himself mournfully, "I should have learned all about it. 'Let no one else read over me, but send, Father, at once to the Kiev Seminary and fetch the bursar, Khoma Brut; let him pray three nights for my sinful soul. He knows!...' But what he knows, I did not hear; she, poor darling, could say no more before she died. You, good man, are no doubt well known for your holy life and pious deeds, and she, maybe, heard tell of you."

"Who? I?" said the philosopher, stepping back in amazement. "Me, leading a holy life?" he articulated, looking straight in the *sotnik*'s face. "God be with you, sir! What are you talking about! Why—though it's not a seemly thing to speak of—I paid the baker's wife a visit on Holy Thursday."

"Well.... I suppose there must be some reason for fixing on you. You must begin your duties this very day."

"As to that, I would tell your honour.... Of course, any man versed in holy scripture may, as far as in him lies... but

a deacon or a sacristan would be better fitted for it. They are men of understanding, and know how it is all done; while I.... Besides, I haven't the right voice for it, and I myself am good for nothing. I'm not the figure for it."

"Well, say what you like, I shall carry out all my darling's wishes, I will spare nothing. And if for three nights from today you duly recite the prayers over her, I will reward you; if not I don't advise the devil himself to anger me."

The last words were uttered by the *sotnik* so vigorously that the philosopher fully grasped their significance.

"Follow me!" said the *sotnik.*

They went out into the hall. The *sotnik* opened the door into another room, opposite the first. The philosopher paused a minute in the hall to blow his nose and crossed the threshold with unaccountable apprehension.

The floor was covered with red cotton stuff. On a high table in the corner under the holy images lay the body of the dead girl on a coverlet of dark blue velvet adorned with gold fringe and tassels. Tall wax candles, entwined with sprigs of guelder rose, stood at her feet and head, shedding a dim light that was lost in the brightness of daylight. The dead girl's face was hidden from him by the inconsolable father, who sat down facing her with his back to the door. The philosopher was impressed by the words he heard:

"I am grieving, my dearly beloved daughter, not that in the flower of your age you have left the earth, to my sorrow and mourning, without living your allotted span; I grieve, my darling, that I know not him, my bitter foe, who was the cause of your death. And if I knew the man who could but dream of hurting you, or even saying anything unkind of you, I swear to God he should not see his children again, if he be old as I, nor his father and mother, if he be of that time of life, and his

body should be cast out to be devoured by the birds and beasts of the steppe! But my grief is, my wild marigold, my birdie, light of my eyes, that I must live out my days without comfort, wiping with the skirt of my coat the trickling tears that flow from my old eyes, while my enemy will be making merry and secretly mocking at the feeble old man. . . ."

He fell silent, due to an outburst of sorrow, which found vent in a flood of tears.

The philosopher was touched by such inconsolable sadness; he coughed, uttering a hollow sound in the effort to clear his throat. The *sotnik* turned round and pointed him to a place at the dead girl's head, before a small lectern with books on it.

"I shall get through three nights somehow," thought the philosopher. "And the old man will stuff both my pockets with gold pieces for it."

He drew near and, clearing his throat once more, began reading, paying no attention to anything else and not venturing to glance at the face of the dead girl. A profound stillness reigned in the room. He noticed that the *sotnik* had withdrawn. Slowly he turned his head to look at the dead, and—

A shudder ran through his veins: before him lay a beauty whose like had surely never lived on earth before. Never, it seemed, could features have been formed in such striking yet harmonious beauty. She lay as though living: the lovely forehead, fair as snow, as silver, looked deep in thought; the even brows—dark as night in the midst of sunshine—rose proudly above the closed eyes; the eyelashes, that fell like arrows on the cheeks, glowed with the warmth of secret desires; the lips were rubies, ready to break into the laugh of bliss, the flood of joy. . . . But in them, in those very features, he saw something terrible and poignant. He felt a sickening ache stirring in his

heart, as though, in the midst of a whirl of gaiety and dancing crowds, someone had begun singing a mournful song. The rubies of her lips looked like blood surging up from her heart. All at once he was aware of something dreadfully familiar in her face. "The witch!" he cried in a voice not his own as, turning pale, he looked away and fell to repeating his prayers. It was the witch that he had killed!

When the sun was setting, they carried the corpse to the church. The philosopher supported the coffin swathed in black on his shoulder, and felt something cold as ice on it. The *sotnik* walked in front, with his hand on the right side of the dead girl's narrow home. The wooden church, blackened by age and overgrown with green lichen, stood disconsolately, with its three cone-shaped domes, at the very end of the village. It was evident that no service had been performed in it for a long time. Candles had been lighted before almost every image. The coffin was set down in the centre opposite the altar. The old *sotnik* kissed the dead girl once more, bowed down to the ground, and went out together with the coffin-bearers, giving orders that the philosopher should have a good supper and then be taken to the church. On reaching the kitchen all the men who had carried the coffin began putting their hands on the stove, as the custom is with Ukrainians after seeing a dead body.

The hunger, of which the philosopher began at that moment to be conscious, made him for some minutes entirely oblivious of the dead girl. Soon all the servants began gradually assembling in the kitchen, which in the *sotnik*'s house was something like a club, where all the inhabitants of the yard gathered together, including even the dogs, who, wagging their tails, came to the door for bones and slops. Wherever anybody might be sent, and with whatever duty he might be charged, he always went first to the kitchen to rest for at least a minute on the bench and

smoke a pipe. All the unmarried men in their smart Cossack tunics lay there almost all day long, on the bench, under the bench, or on the stove—anywhere, in fact, where a comfortable place could be found to lie on. Then everybody invariably left behind in the kitchen either his cap or a whip to keep stray dogs off or some such thing. But the biggest crowd always gathered at supper-time, when the drover who had taken the horses to the paddock, and the herdsman who had brought the cows in to be milked, and all the others who were not to be seen during the day, came in. At supper, even the most taciturn tongues were moved to loquacity. It was then that all the news was talked over: who had got himself new trousers, and what was hidden in the bowels of the earth, and who had seen a wolf. There were witty talkers among them; indeed, there is no lack of them anywhere among the Ukrainians.

The philosopher sat down with the rest in a big circle in the open air before the kitchen door. Soon a peasant-woman in a red bonnet popped out, holding in both hands a steaming bowl of dumplings, which she set down in their midst. Each pulled out a wooden spoon from his pocket, or, for lack of a spoon, a wooden stick. As soon as their jaws began moving more slowly, and the wolfish hunger of the whole party was somewhat assuaged, many of them began talking. The conversation naturally turned to the dead maiden.

"Is it true," said a young shepherd who had put so many buttons and copper discs on the leather strap on which his pipe hung that he looked like a small haberdasher's shop, "is it true that the young lady, saving your presence, was on friendly terms with the Evil One?"

"Who? The young mistress?" said Dorosh, a man our philosopher already knew. "Why, she was a regular witch! I'll take my oath she was a witch!"

"Hush, hush, Dorosh," said another man, who had shown a great disposition to soothe the others on the journey, "that's no business of ours, God bless it! It's no good talking about it."

But Dorosh was not at all inclined to hold his tongue; he had just been to the cellar on some job with the butler, and, having applied his lips to two or three barrels, he had come out extremely merry and talked away without ceasing.

"What do you want? Me, to be quiet?" he said. "Why, I've been ridden by her myself! Upon my soul, I have!"

"Tell us, Uncle," said the young shepherd with the buttons, "are there signs by which you can tell a witch?"

"No, there aren't," answered Dorosh, "there's no way of telling; you might read through all the psalm-books and you couldn't tell."

"Yes, you can, Dorosh, you can; don't say that," the former comforter objected; "it's with good purpose God has given every creature its peculiar habit; folks that have studied say that a witch has a little tail."

"When a woman's old, she's a witch," the grey-headed Cossack said coolly.

"Oh! you're a nice set!" retorted the peasant-woman, who was at that instant pouring a fresh lot of dumplings into the empty pot. "Regular fat hogs!"

The old Cossack, whose name was Yavtukh and nickname Kovtun, gave a smile of satisfaction seeing that his words had cut the old woman to the quick; while the herdsman gave vent to a guffaw, like the bellowing of two bulls as they stand facing each other.

The conversation had aroused the philosopher's curiosity and made him intensely anxious to learn more details about the *sotnik*'s daughter, and so, wishing to bring the talk back to that

subject, he turned to his neighbour with the words, "I should like to ask why all the folk sitting at supper here look upon the young mistress as a witch? Did she do a mischief to anybody or bring anybody to harm?"

"There were all sorts of doings," answered one of the company, a man with a flat face strikingly resembling a spade. "Everybody remembers the dog-boy Mikita and the—"

"What about the dog-boy Mikita?" said the philosopher.

"Stop! I'll tell about the dog-boy Mikita," said Dorosh.

"I'll tell about him," said the drover, "for he was a great crony of mine."

"I'll tell about Mikita," said Spirid.

"Let him, let Spirid tell it!" shouted the company.

Spirid began: "You didn't know Mikita, Mr. Philosopher Khoma. Ah, he was a rare sort of man! He knew every dog as well as he knew his own father. The dog-boy we've got now, Mikola, who's sitting next but two from me, isn't worth the sole of his shoe. Though he knows his job, too, but beside the other he's trash, slops!"

"You tell the story well, very well!" said Dorosh, nodding his head approvingly.

Spirid went on: "He'd see a hare quicker than you'd wipe the snuff from your nose. He'd whistle: 'Here, Breaker! here, Swift-Foot!' mount his horse and spur it into a full gallop; and there was no saying which would outrace the other, he the dog, or the dog him. He'd toss off a mug of vodka without winking. He was a fine dog-boy! Only a little time back he began to be always staring at the young mistress. Whether he had fallen in love with her or whether she had simply bewitched him, anyway the man was done for, he went fairly silly; the devil only knows what he turned into ... pfoo! No decent word for it...."

"That's good," said Dorosh.

"As soon as the young mistress looks at him, he drops the bridle out of his hand, calls Breaker Bushy-Brow, is all of a fluster and doesn't know what he's doing. One day the young mistress comes into the stable where he is rubbing down a horse.

"'I say, Mikita,' says she, 'let me put my foot on you.' And he, silly fellow, is pleased at that. 'Not your foot only,' says he, 'you may sit on me.' The young mistress lifted her foot, and as soon as he saw her bare, plump, white leg, he went fairly crazy, so he said. He bent his back, silly fellow, and clasping her bare legs in his hands, ran galloping like a horse all over the countryside. And he couldn't say where he was driven, but he came back more dead than alive, and from that time he withered up and became like a chip of wood; and one day when they went into the stable, instead of him they found a heap of ashes lying there and an empty pail; he had burnt up entirely, burnt up of himself. And he was a dog-boy such as you couldn't find all the world over."

When Spirid had finished his story, reflections upon the rare qualities of the deceased dog-boy followed from all sides.

"And haven't you heard tell of Sheptun's wife ?" said Dorosh, addressing Khoma.

"No."

"Well, well! You are not taught with too much sense, it seems, in the Seminary. Listen, then. There's a Cossack called Sheptun in our village—a good Cossack! He is given to stealing at times, and telling lies when there's no occasion, but ... he's a good Cossack. His cottage is not very far from here. Just about the very hour that we sat down this evening to table, Sheptun and his wife finished their supper and lay down to sleep. And as the

weather was fine, his wife lay down in the yard, and Sheptun in the cottage on the bench; or no ... it was the wife who lay indoors on the bench and Sheptun in the yard—"

"Not on the bench, she was lying on the floor," put in a peasant-woman, who stood in the doorway with her cheek propped in her hand.

Dorosh looked at her, then looked down, then looked at her again, and after a brief pause, said, "When I strip off your petticoat before everybody, you won't be pleased."

This warning had its effect; the old woman held her tongue and did not interrupt the story again.

Dorosh went on: "And in the cradle hanging in the middle of the cottage lay a baby a year old—whether of the male or female sex I can't say. Sheptun's wife was lying there when she heard a dog scratching at the door and howling fit to make you run out of the cottage. She was scared, for women are such foolish creatures that, if towards evening you put your tongue out at one from behind a door, her heart's in her mouth. However, she thought: 'Well, I'll go and give that damned dog a whack on its nose, and maybe it will stop howling.' She took the oven-fork and went to open the door. She had hardly opened it a crack when a dog dashed in between her legs and straight to the baby's cradle. She saw that it was no longer a dog, but the young mistress, and if it had been the young lady in her own shape as she knew her, it would not have been so bad. But the peculiar thing is that she was all blue and her eyes glowing like coals. She snatched up the child, bit its throat, and began sucking its blood. Sheptun's wife could only scream, 'Oh, my God!' and rushed out of the house. But she sees the door's locked in the passage; she flies up to the loft and there she sits all of a shake, silly woman; and then she sees the young mistress coming up to her in the loft; she pounced on her and began biting the silly woman.

When Sheptun pulled his wife down from the loft in the morning she was bitten all over and had turned black and blue; and the next day the silly woman died. So you see what uncanny and wicked doings happen in the world! Though it is of the gentry's breed, a witch is a witch."

After telling his story, Dorosh looked about him complacently and thrust his finger into his pipe, preparing to fill it with tobacco. The subject of the witch seemed inexhaustible. Each in turn hastened to tell some tale of her. One had seen the witch in the form of a haystack come right up to the door of his cottage; another had had his cap or his pipe stolen by her; many of the girls in the village had had their plaits cut off by her; others had lost several quarts of blood sucked by her.

At last the company pulled themselves together and saw that they had been chattering too long, for it was quite dark in the yard. They all began wandering off to their sleeping places, which were either in the kitchen, or the barns, or the middle of the courtyard.

"Well, Mr. Khoma! Now it's time for us to go to the deceased lady," said the grey-headed Cossack, addressing the philosopher; and together with Spirid and Dorosh they set off to the church, lashing with their whips at the dogs, of which there were a great number in the road, and which gnawed their sticks angrily.

Though the philosopher had managed to fortify himself with a good mugful of *horilka*, he felt a fear creeping stealthily over him as they approached the lighted church. The stories and strange tales he had heard helped to work upon his imagination. The darkness under the fence and trees grew less thick as they came into the more open place. At last they went into the church enclosure and found a little yard, beyond which there was not

a tree to be seen, nothing but open country and meadows swallowed up in the darkness of night. The three Cossacks and Khoma mounted the steep steps to the porch and went into the church. Here they left the philosopher with the best wishes that he might carry out his duties satisfactorily, and locked the door after them, as their master had bidden them.

The pilosopher was left alone. First he yawned, then he stretched, then he blew into both hands, and at last he looked about him. In the middle of the church stood the black coffin; candles were gleaming under the dark images, lighting up the icon-stand and shedding a faint glimmer in the middle of the church; the distant corners were wrapped in darkness. The tall, old-fashioned icon-stand showed traces of great antiquity; its carved fretwork, once gilt, now glistened here and there with splashes of gold; the gilt had peeled off in one place, and was completely tarnished in another; the faces of the saints, blackened by age, had a gloomy look. The philosopher looked round him again. "Well," he said, "what is there to be afraid of here? No living man can come in here, and to guard me from the dead and ghosts from the other world I have prayers that I have but to read aloud to keep them from laying a finger on me. It's all right!" he repeated with a wave of his hand, "let's read." Going up to the lectern he saw some bundles of candles. "That's good," thought the philosopher; "I must light up the whole church so that it may be as bright as by daylight. Oh, it's a pity one can't smoke a pipe in the temple of God!"

And he proceeded to stick up wax candles at all the cornices, lecterns and images, not stinting them at all, and soon the whole church was flooded with light. Only overhead the darkness seemed somehow more profound, and the gloomy icons looked even more sullenly out of their antique carved frames, which glistened here and there with specks of gilt. He went up to the

coffin, looked timidly at the face of the dead—and could not help closing his eyelids with a faint shudder: such terrible, brilliant beauty!

He turned and tried to move away; but with the strange curiosity, the self-contradictory feeling, which dogs a man especially in times of terror, he could not, as he withdrew, resist taking another look. And then, after the same shudder, he looked again. The striking beauty of the dead maiden certainly seemed terrible. Possibly, indeed, she would not have overwhelmed him with such panic fear if she had been a little less lovely. But there was in her features nothing faded, tarnished, dead; her face was living, and it seemed to the philosopher that she was looking at him with closed eyes. He even fancied that a tear was oozing from under her right eyelid, and when it rested on her cheek, he saw distinctly that it was a drop of blood.

He walked hastily away to the lectern, opened the book, and to give himself more confidence began reading in a very loud voice. His voice smote upon the wooden church walls, which had so long been deaf and silent; it rang out, forlorn, unechoed, in a deep bass in the absolutely dead stillness, and seemed somehow uncanny even to the reader himself. "What is there to be afraid of?" he was saying meanwhile to himself. "She won't rise up out of her coffin, for she will fear the word of God. Let her lie there! And a fine Cossack I am, if I should be scared. Well, I've drunk a drop too much—that's why it seems dreadful. I'll have a pinch of snuff. Ah, the good snuff! Fine snuff, good snuff!" However, as he turned over the pages, he kept taking sidelong glances at the coffin, and an involuntary feeling seemed whispering to him, "Look, look, she is going to get up! See, she'll sit up, she'll look out from the coffin!"

But the silence was death-like; the coffin stood motionless; the candles shed a perfect flood of light. A church lighted up

at night with a dead body in it and no living soul near is full of terror!

Raising his voice, he began singing in various keys, trying to drown the fears that still lurked in him, but every minute he turned his eyes to the coffin, as though asking, in spite of himself, "What if she does sit up, if she gets up?"

But the coffin did not stir. If there had but been some sound! some living creature! There was not so much as a cricket chirring in the corner! There was nothing but the faint splutter of a faraway candle, the light tap of a drop of wax falling on the floor.

"What if she were to get up?..."

She was raising her head....

He looked at her wildly and rubbed his eyes. She was, indeed, not lying down now, but sitting up in the coffin. He looked away, and again turned his eyes with horror on the coffin. She stood up ... she was walking about the church with her eyes shut, moving her arms to and fro as though trying to catch someone.

She was coming straight towards him. In terror he drew a circle round him; with an effort he began reading the prayers and pronouncing the exorcisms which had been taught him by a monk who had all his life seen witches and evil spirits.

She stood almost on the very line; but it was clear that she had not the power to cross it, and she turned livid all over like one who has been dead for several days. Khoma had not the courage to look at her; she was terrifying. She ground her teeth and opened her dead eyes; but, seeing nothing, turned with fury—that was apparent in her quivering face—in another direction, and flinging her arms, clutched in them each column and corner, trying to catch Khoma. At last she

stood still, holding up a menacing finger, and lay down again in her coffin.

The philosopher could not recover his self-possession, but kept gazing at the narrow dwelling-place of the witch. All of a sudden the coffin sprang up from its place and with a hissing sound began flying all over the church, zigzagging through the air in all directions.

The philosopher saw it almost over his head, but at the same time he realized that it could not cross the circle he had drawn, and he redoubled his exorcisms. The coffin dropped down in the middle of the church and remained motionless. The corpse got up out of it, livid and greenish. But at that instant the crow of the cock was heard in the distance; the corpse sank back in the coffin and the lid closed.

The philosopher's heart was throbbing, and he had broken into sweat; but, emboldened by the cock's crowing, he read on more rapidly the pages he ought to have read through before. At the first streak of dawn the sacristan came to relieve him, together with old Yavtukh, who was at that time performing the duties of a beadle.

On reaching his distant sleeping-place, the philosopher could not for a long time get to sleep; but weariness gained the upper hand at last and he slept on till dinner-time. When he woke up, all the events of the night seemed to him to have happened in a dream. To keep up his strength he was given at dinner a mug of *horilka*.

Over dinner he soon grew lively, made a remark or two, and devoured a rather old large sucking pig almost unaided; but some feeling he could not have explained made him unable to bring himself to speak of his adventures in the church, and to the inquiries of the inquisitive he replied, "Yes, all sorts of strange things happened!" The philosopher was one of those

people who, if they are well fed, are moved to extraordinary benevolence. Lying down with his pipe in his teeth he watched them all with a honeyed look in his eyes and kept spitting to one side.

After dinner the philosopher was in excellent spirits. He went round the whole village and made friends with almost everybody; he was kicked out of two cottages indeed; one good-looking young woman caught him a good smack on the back with a spade when he took it into his head to try her shift and skirt, and inquire what stuff they were made of. But as evening approached the philosopher grew more pensive. An hour before supper almost all the servants gathered together to play *kragli*—a sort of skittles in which long sticks are used instead of balls, and the winner has the right to ride on the loser's back. This game became very entertaining for the spectators; often the drover, a man as broad as a pancake, was mounted on the swine-herd, a feeble little man, who was nothing but wrinkles. Another time it was the drover who had to bow his back, and Dorosh, leaping on it, always said, "What a fine bull!" The more dignified of the company sat in the kitchen doorway. They looked on very gravely, smoking their pipes, even when the young people roared with laughter at some witty remark from the drover or Spirid. Khoma tried in vain to give himself up to this game; some gloomy thought stuck in his head like a nail. At supper, in spite of his efforts to be merry, terror grew within him as the darkness spread over the sky.

"Come, it's time to set off, Mr. Seminarist!" said his friend, the grey-headed Cossack, getting up from the table together with Dorosh. "Let us go to our task."

Khoma was taken back to the church in the same way; he was left there, and the door was locked upon him. As soon as he found himself alone, fear began to take possession of him

again. Once again he saw the dark icons, the gleaming frames, and the familiar black coffin standing in menacing stillness and immobility in the middle of the church.

"Well," he said to himself, "now there's nothing marvellous to me in this marvel. It was only alarming the first time. Yes, it was only rather alarming the first time; now it's not alarming at all."

He made haste to take his stand at the lectern, drew a circle round him, pronounced some exorcisms, and began reading aloud, resolving not to raise his eyes from the book and not to pay attention to anything. He had been reading for about an hour and was beginning to cough and feel rather tired; he took his horn out of his pocket and, before putting the snuff to his nose, stole a timid look at the coffin. His heart turned cold; the corpse was already standing before him on the very edge of the circle, and her dead greenish eyes were fixed upon him. The philosopher shuddered, and a chill ran through his veins. Dropping his eyes to the book, he began reading the prayers and exorcisms more loudly, and heard the corpse again grinding her teeth and waving her arms trying to catch him. But with a sidelong glance out of one eye he saw that the corpse was feeling for him where he was not standing, and that she evidently could not see him. He heard a hollow mutter, and she began pronouncing terrible words with her dead lips; they gurgled hoarsely like the bubbling of boiling pitch. He could not have said what they meant; but there was something fearful in them. The philosopher understood with horror that she was making an incantation.

A wind blew through the church at her words, and there was a sound as of multitudes of flying wings. He heard the beating of wings on the panes of the church windows and on the iron window-frames, the dull scratching of claws upon the iron, and an immense troop thundering on the doors and trying to break

in. His heart was throbbing violently all this time; closing his eyes, he kept reading prayers and exorcisms. At last there was a sudden shrill sound in the distance; it was a distant cock crowing. The philosopher, utterly spent, stopped and took breath.

When they came in to fetch him, they found him more dead than alive; he was leaning with his back against the wall, while with his eyes almost starting out of his head he stared at the Cossacks as they came in. They could scarcely get him along and had to support him all the way back. On reaching the courtyard, he pulled himself together and bade them give him a mug of *horilka*. When he had drunk it, he stroked down the hair on his head and said, "There are lots of foul things of all sorts in the world! And the panics they give one, there...." With that the philosopher waved his hand in despair.

The company round him bowed their heads, hearing such sayings. Even a small boy, whom everybody in the servants' quarters felt himself entitled to depute in his place when it was a question of cleaning the stables or fetching water, even this poor youngster stared open-mouthed at the philosopher.

At that moment the old cook's assistant, a peasant-woman not yet past middle age, a terrible coquette who always found something to pin to her cap—a bit of ribbon, a pink, or even a scrap of coloured paper, if she had nothing better—passed by, in a tightly fitting apron, which displayed her round, sturdy figure.

"Good day, Khoma!" she said, seeing the philosopher. "My, my, what's the matter with you?" she cried out, clasping her hands.

"What do you mean, silly woman?"

"Oh, my goodness! Why, you've gone quite grey!"

"Why, she's right!" Spirid pronounced, looking attentively at the philosopher. "You have really gone as grey as our old Yavtukh."

The philosopher, hearing this, ran headlong to the kitchen, where he had noticed on the wall a fly-blown triangular bit of looking-glass before which were stuck forget-me-nots, periwinkles and even wreaths of marigolds, testifying to its importance for the toilet of the finery-loving coquette. With horror he saw the truth of their words: half of his hair had in fact turned white.

Khoma Brut hung his head and abandoned himself to reflection. "I will go to the master," he said at last. "I'll tell him all about it and explain that I cannot go on reading. Let him send me back to Kiev straight away."

With these thoughts in his mind he bent his steps towards the porch of the house.

The *sotnik* was sitting almost motionless in his room. The same hopeless grief which the philosopher had seen in his face before was still apparent. Only his cheeks were sunken even more. It was evident that he had taken very little food, or perhaps had not eaten at all. The extraordinary pallor of his face gave it a look of stony immobility.

"Good day!" he pronounced on seeing Khoma who stood, cap in hand, at the door. "Well, how goes it with you? All satisfactory?"

"It's satisfactory, all right; such devilish doings, that one can but pick up one's cap and take to one's heels."

"How's that?"

"Why, your daughter, Your Honour—. Looking at it reasonably, she is, to be sure, of noble birth, nobody is going to gainsay it; only, saving your presence, God rest her soul—"

"What of my daughter?"

"She had dealings with Satan. She gives one such horrors that there's no reading scripture at all."

"Read away! Read away! She did well to send for you; she took much care, poor darling, about her soul and tried to drive away all evil thoughts with prayers."

"That's as you like to say, Your Honour; upon my soul, I cannot go on with it!"

"Read away!" the *sotnik* persisted in the same persuasive voice. "You have only one night left; you will do a Christian deed and I will reward you."

"But whatever rewards—. Do as you please, Your Honour, but I will not read!" Khoma declared resolutely.

"Listen, philosopher!" said the *sotnik*, and his voice grew firm and menacing. "I don't like these pranks. You can behave like that in your Seminary; but with me it is different. When I flog, it's not the same as your rector's flogging. Do you know what good leather whips are like?"

"I should think I do!" said the philosopher, dropping his voice. "Everybody knows what leather whips are like: in a large dose, it's quite unbearable."

"Yes, but you don't know yet how my lads can lay them on!" said the *sotnik* menacingly, rising to his feet, and his face assumed an imperious and ferocious expression that betrayed the unbridled violence of his character, only subdued for the time by sorrow. "Here they first give a sound flogging, then sprinkle with *horilka*, and begin over again. Go along, go along, finish your task! If you don't—you'll never get up again. If you do—thousand gold pieces!"

"Oho, ho! he's a stiff one!" thought the philosopher as he went out. "He's not to be trifled with. Wait a bit, friend; I'll cut and run, so that you and your hounds will never catch me."

And Khoma made up his mind to run away. He only waited for the hour after dinner when all the servants were accustomed to lie about in the hay in the barns and to give vent to such snores and wheezing that the backyard sounded like a factory.

The time came at last. Even Yavtukh closed his eyes as he lay stretched out in the sun. Trembling with fear, the philosopher stealthily made his way into the pleasure garden, from which he fancied he could escape more easily into the open country without being observed. As is usual with such gardens, it was dreadfully neglected and overgrown, and so made an extremely suitable setting for any secret enterprise. Except for one little path, trodden by the servants on their tasks, it was entirely hidden in a dense thicket of cherry-trees, elders and burdock, which thrust up their tall stems covered with clinging pinkish burs. A network of wild hop was flung over this medley of trees and bushes of varied hues, forming a roof over them, clinging to the fence and falling, mingled with wild bell-flowers, from it in coiling snakes. Beyond the fence, which formed the boundary of the garden, there came a perfect forest of rank grass and weeds, which looked as though no one cared to peep enviously into it, and as though any scythe would be broken to bits trying to mow down the stout stubby stalks.

When the philosopher tried to get over the fence, his teeth chattered and his heart beat so violently that he was frightened at it. The skirts of his long coat seemed to stick to the ground as though someone had nailed them down. As he climbed over, he fancied he heard a voice shout in his ears with a deafening hiss, "Where are you off to?" The philosopher dived into the long grass and fell to running, frequently stumbling over old roots and trampling upon moles. He saw that when he came out of the rank weeds he would have to cross a field, and that beyond it lay a dark thicket of blackthorn, in which he thought he would

be safe. He expected after making his way through it to find the road leading straight to Kiev. He ran across the field at once and found himself in the thicket.

He crawled through the prickly bushes, paying a toll of rags from his coat on every thorn, and came out into a little hollow. A willow with spreading branches bent down almost to the earth. A little brook sparkled pure as silver. The first thing the philosopher did was to lie down and drink, for he was insufferably thirsty. "Good water!" he said, wiping his lips; "I might rest here!"

"No, we had better go straight ahead; they'll be coming to look for you!"

These words rang out above his ears. He looked round—before him was standing Yavtukh. "Curse Yavtukh!" the philosopher thought in his wrath; "I could take you and fling you.... And I could batter in your ugly face and all of you with an oak post."

"You needn't have gone such a long way round," Yavtukh went on. "You'd have done better to keep to the road I have come by, straight by the stable. And it's a pity about your coat. It's good cloth. What did you pay a yard for it? But we've walked far enough; it's time to go home."

The philosopher trudged after Yavtukh, scratching the back of his head. "Now the cursed witch will give it to me!" he thought. "Though, after all, what am I thinking about? What am I afraid of? Am I not a Cossack? Why, I've been through two nights, God will succour me the third also. The cursed witch committed a fine lot of sins, it seems, since the Evil One makes such a fight for her."

Such were the reflections that absorbed him as he walked into the courtyard. Keeping up his spirits with these thoughts he asked Dorosh, who through the patronage of the butler some-

times had access to the cellars, to pull out a keg of vodka; and the two friends, sitting in the barn, put away not much less than half a pailful, so that the philosopher, getting on to his feet, shouted, "Musicians! I must have musicians!" and without waiting for the latter fell to dancing *trepak* in a clear space in the middle of the yard. He danced till it was time for the afternoon snack, and the servants who stood round him in a circle, as is the custom on such occasions, at last spat on the ground and walked away, saying, "Good gracious, what a time the fellow keeps it up!" At last the philosopher lay down to sleep on the spot, and a good sousing of cold water was needed to wake him up for supper. At supper he talked of what it meant to be a Cossack, and how he should not be afraid of anything in the world.

"Time is up," said Yavtukh. "Come on."

"A splinter through your tongue, you damned hog!" thought the philosopher, and getting to his feet he said, "Come along."

On the way the philosopher kept glancing from side to side and made faint attempts at conversation with his companions. But Yavtukh said nothing; and even Dorosh was disinclined to talk. It was a hellish night. A whole pack of wolves was howling in the distance, and even the barking of the dogs had a dreadful sound.

"I fancy something else is howling; that's not a wolf," said Dorosh. Yavtukh was silent. The philosopher could find nothing to say.

They drew near the church and stepped under the decaying wooden domes that showed how little the owner of the place thought about God and his own soul. Yavtukh and Dorosh withdrew as before, and the philosopher was left alone.

Everything was the same, everything wore the same sinister familiar aspect. He stood still for a minute. The horrible witch's coffin was still standing motionless in the middle of the church.

"I won't be afraid; by God, I will not!" he said and, drawing a circle around himself as before, he began recalling all his spells and exorcisms. There was an awful stillness; the candles spluttered and flooded the whole church with light. The philosopher turned one page, then turned another and noticed that he was not reading what was written in the book. With horror he crossed himself and began chanting. This gave him a little more courage; the reading made progress, and the pages turned rapidly one after the other.

All of a sudden ... in the midst of the stillness ... the iron lid of the coffin burst with a crash and the corpse rose up. It was more terrible than the first time. Its teeth clacked horribly against each other, its lips twitched convulsively, and incantations came from them in wild shrieks. A whirlwind swept through the church, the icons fell to the ground, broken glass came flying down from the windows. The doors were burst from their hinges and a countless multitude of monstrous beings trooped into the church of God. A terrible noise of wings and scratching claws filled the church. Everything flew and raced about looking for the philosopher.

All trace of drink had disappeared, and Khoma's head was quite clear now. He kept crossing himself and repeating prayers at random. And all the while he heard the fiends whirring round him, almost touching him with their loathsome tails and the tips of their wings. He had not the courage to look at them; he only saw a huge monster, the whole width of the wall, standing in the shade of its matted locks as of a forest; through the tangle of hair two eyes glared horribly with eyebrows slightly lifted.

Above it something was hanging in the air like an immense bubble with a thousand claws and scorpion-stings protruding from the centre; black earth hung in clods on them. They were all looking at him, seeking him, but could not see him, surrounded by his mysterious circle. "Bring Viy! Fetch Viy!" he heard the corpse cry.

And suddenly, a stillness fell upon the church; the wolves' howling was heard in the distance, and soon there was the thud of heavy footsteps resounding through the church. With a sidelong glance he saw they were bringing a squat, thickset, bandy-legged figure. He was covered all over with black earth. His arms and legs grew out like strong sinewy roots. He trod heavily, stumbling at every step. His long eyelids hung down to the very ground. Khoma saw with horror that his face was of iron. He was supported under the arms and led straight to the spot where Khoma was standing.

"Lift up my eyelids. I do not see!" said Viy in a voice that seemed to come from underground—and all the company flew to raise his eyelids.

"Do not look!" an inner voice whispered to the philosopher. He could not restrain himself and he looked.

"There he is!" shouted Viy, and thrust an iron finger at him. And the whole horde pounced upon the philosopher. He fell expiring to the ground, and his soul fled from his body in terror.

There was the sound of a cock crowing. It was the second cock-crow; the first had been missed by the gnomes. In panic they rushed to the doors and windows to fly out in utmost haste; but they stuck in the doors and windows and remained there.

When the priest went in, he stopped short at the sight of this defamation of God's holy place, and dared not serve the requiem

on such a spot. And so the church was left for ever, with monsters stuck in the doors and windows, was overgrown with trees, roots, rough grass and wild thorns, and no one can now find the way to it.

When the rumours of this reached Kiev, and the theologian, Khalyava, heard at last of the fate of the philosopher Khoma, he spent a whole hour plunged in thought. Great changes had befallen him during that time. Fortune had smiled on him: on the conclusion of his course of study he was made bell-ringer of the very highest belfry, and he was almost always to be seen with a damaged nose, as the wooden staircase to the belfry had been extremely carelessly made.

"Have you heard what has happened to Khoma?" Tibery Gorobets, who by now was a philosopher and had a newly grown moustache, asked coming up to him.

"Such was the lot God sent him," said Khalyava the bell-ringer. "Let us go to the pot-house and drink to his memory!"

The young philosopher, who was beginning to enjoy his privileges with the ardour of an enthusiast, so that his full trousers and his coat and even his cap reeked of spirits and coarse tobacco, instantly signified his readiness.

"He was a fine fellow, Khoma was!" said the bell-ringer, as the lame pot-house keeper set the third mug before him. "He was a fine man! And he came to grief for nothing."

"I know why he came to grief: it was because he was afraid; if he had not been afraid, the witch could not have done anything to him. You have only to cross yourself and spit just on her tail, and nothing will happen. I know all about it. Why, the old market-women in Kiev are all witches."

To this the bell-ringer bowed his head in token of agreement. But, observing that his tongue was incapable of uttering a single word, he cautiously got up from the table and, lurching to right and to left, went to hide in a remote spot in the tall weeds; from the force of habit, however, he did not forget to carry off the sole of an old boot that was lying about on the bench.

THE TALE OF HOW IVAN IVANOVICH QUARRELED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVICH

I consider it as my duty to forewarn the reader that the incident described in this story occurred a very long time ago. Moreover, it is pure fiction. There is nothing of the former self of Mirgorod left. Its houses are different; the puddle which used to be in the middle of the town has long since dried up, and the dignitaries—the judge, the assessor and the mayor—are all respectable and well-meaning people.

Chapter I

IVAN IVANOVICH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVICH

Ivan Ivanovich has a splendid *bekesha*!* Superb! And what astrakhan! Phew, damn it all, what astrakhan! Purplish-grey with a frost on it! I'll bet anything you please that nobody can

* A short coat made of fur or astrakhan.—*Tr.*

be found with one like it! Now do just look at it—particularly when he stops to talk to someone—look from the side: isn't it delicious? There is no finding words for it. Velvet! Silver! Fire! Merciful Lord! Nicholas the Miracle-Worker, Holy Saint! Why don't I have a *bekesha* like that! He had it made before Agafya Fedoseyevna went to Kiev. You know Agafya Fedoseyevna? The lady who bit off the assessor's ear.

An excellent man is Ivan Ivanovich! What a house he has in Mirgorod! There's a gallery all round it on oak posts, and there are seats in the gallery everywhere. When the weather is too hot, Ivan Ivanovich casts off his *bekesha* and his nether garments, remaining in nothing but his shirt, and rests in his gallery watching what is passing in the yard and in the street. What apple-trees and pear-trees he has under his very windows! You only open the window—and the branches fairly thrust themselves into the room. That is all in front of the house; but you should just see what he has in the garden at the back! He has everything there. Plums, cherries white and black, vegetables of all sorts, sunflowers, cucumbers, melons, peas, even a threshing barn and a forge.

An excellent man is Ivan Ivanovich! He is very fond of a melon: it is his favourite dish. As soon as he has dined and come out into the gallery, wearing nothing but his shirt, he at once bids Gapka bring him two melons, and with his own hands cuts them into slices, collects the seeds in a special piece of paper, and begins eating them. And then he tells Gapka to bring the inkstand, and with his own hand writes an inscription on the paper containing the seeds: "This melon was eaten on such and such a date." If some visitor happens to partake in the meal, he adds: "So and so was present."

The late Mirgorod judge always looked at Ivan Ivanovich's house with admiration. Yes, the little house is very nice. What

I like is that wings have been built on every side of it, so that if you look at it from a distance, there is nothing to be seen but roofs, lying one over another, very much like a plateful of pancakes or even more like those funguses that grow upon a tree. All the roofs are thatched with reeds, however; a willow, an oak-tree and two apple-trees lean their spreading branches on them. Little windows with carved and whitewashed shutters peep through the trees and even run out into the street.

An excellent man is Ivan Ivanovich! The Poltava Commissar, Dorosh Tarasovich Pukhivochka, knows him, too; when he comes from Khorol, he always drops in to see him. And whenever the chief priest, Father Pyotr, who lives at Koliberda, has half a dozen visitors, he always says that he knows no one who fulfils the duty of a Christian and knows how to live as Ivan Ivanovich does.

Goodness, how time flies! At that time he had been a widower for already ten years. He had no children. Gapka has children and they often run about the yard. Ivan Ivanovich always gives each of them a bread-ring, a slice of melon, or a pear. His Gapka carries the keys of the cupboards and cellars; but the key of the big chest standing in his bedroom, and of the middle room, Ivan Ivanovich keeps himself, and he does not like anyone to go there. Gapka is a sturdy wench, she goes about in a *zapaska,** with fine healthy calves and fresh cheeks.

And what a devuot man Ivan Ivanovich is! Every Sunday he puts on his *bekesha* and goes to church. When he goes in Ivan Ivanovich bows in all directions and then usually instals himself in the choir and sings a very good bass. When the service is over, Ivan Ivanovich cannot bear to go away without making the round of the beggars. He would, perhaps, not care to go

* A Ukrainian garment consisting of two separate pieces of material, like two aprons, one worn in front and one at the back, making a skirt slit up to the waist and there held together by a girdle.—*Tr.*

through this tedious task, if he were not impelled to it by his innate kindliness. "Good morrow, poor woman!" he commonly says, seeking out the most crippled beggar-woman in a tattered gown made up of patches.

"Where do you come from, poor thing?"

"I've come from the hamlet, kind sir; I've not had a drop to drink or a morsel to eat for three days; my own children turned me out."

"Poor creature! What made you come here?"

"Well, kind sir, I came to ask alms, in case anyone would give me a copper for bread."

"Hm! Do you really want bread?" Ivan Ivanovich usually inquires.

"Indeed and I do! I am as hungry as a dog."

"Hm!" Ivan Ivanovich usually replies. "So perhaps you would like some meat, too?"

"Indeed and I'll be glad of anything your honour may be giving me."

"Hm! Is meat better than bread?"

"Is it for a hungry beggar to be choosing? Whatever you kindly give, sure, it's all good." With this the old woman usually holds out her hand.

"Well, go along and God be with you," says Ivan Ivanovich. "What are you staying for? I am not beating you, am I?"

And after addressing similar inquiries to a second and a third, he at last returns home or goes to drink a glass of vodka with his neighbour, Ivan Nikiforovich, or to see the judge or the mayor.

Ivan Ivanovich is very much pleased if anyone gives him a present or any little offering. He likes that very much.

Ivan Nikiforovich is a very good man, too. His yard is next door to Ivan Ivanovich's. They are such friends as the world has never seen. Anton Prokofyevich Pupopuz, who goes about

to this day in his cinnamon-coloured coat with light blue sleeves, and dines on Sundays at the judge's, used frequently to say that the devil himself had tied Ivan Nikiforovich and Ivan Ivanovich together with a string; where the one went the other would also turn up.

Ivan Nikiforovich has never been married. Though people used to say he was going to be married, it was an absolute falsehood. I know Ivan Nikiforovich very well and can say that he has never had the faintest intention of getting married. What does all this gossip spring from? For instance, it used to be rumoured that Ivan Nikiforovich was born with a tail. But this invention is so absurd, and at the same time so disgusting and improper, that I do not even think it necessary to disprove it to enlightened readers, who must doubtless be aware that none but witches, and only very few of them, in fact, have a tail. Besides, witches belong rather to the female than to the male sex.

In spite of their great affection, these rare friends were not at all alike. Their characters can be best understood by comparison. Ivan Ivanovich has a marvellous gift for speaking extremely pleasantly. Goodness! How he speaks! Listening to him can only be compared with the sensation you have when someone is searching your head or gently passing a finger over your heel. One listens and listens and falls asleep. It is pleasant! Extremely pleasant! like a nap after a good bath. Ivan Nikiforovich, on the other hand, is rather reticent. But if he does rap out a word, one must look out, that's all! He is more cutting than any razor. Ivan Ivanovich is spare and tall; Ivan Nikiforovich is a little shorter, but makes up for it in breadth. Ivan Ivanovich's head is like a radish, tail downwards; Ivan Nikiforovich's head is like a radish, tail upwards. Ivan Ivanovich rests in the gallery in his shirt only after dinner; in the evening he puts on his *bekesha* and goes off somewhere, either to the

town shop which he supplies with flour, or into the country to catch quail. Ivan Nikiforovich lies all day long on his porch, usually with his back to the sun—if it is not too hot a day—and he does not care to go anywhere. If the whim takes him in the morning, he will walk about the yard, see how things are going in the orchard and the house, and then go back to rest again. In old days he used to go round to Ivan Ivanovich sometimes. Ivan Ivanovich is an exceedingly refined man, he never utters an improper word in gentlemanly conversation, and takes offence at once if he hears one. Ivan Nikiforovich is sometimes not so circumspect. Then Ivan Ivanovich usually gets up from his seat and says, "That's enough, that's enough, Ivan Nikiforovich; we had better make haste out into the sun instead of uttering such ungodly words." Ivan Ivanovich is very angry if a fly gets into his borshch: he is quite beside himself then—he will leave the plateful, and his host will catch it. Ivan Nikiforovich is exceedingly fond of bathing, and when he is sitting up to his neck in water, he orders the table and the samovar to be set in the water too, and is very fond of drinking tea in such refreshing coolness. Ivan Ivanovich shaves his beard twice a week; Ivan Nikiforovich only once. Ivan Ivanovich is exceedingly inquisitive. God forbid that you should begin to tell him about something and not finish the story! If he is displeased with anything, he lets you know it. It is extremely difficult to tell from Ivan Nikiforovich's face whether he is pleased or angry; even if he is delighted at something he will not show it. Ivan Ivanovich is rather of a timorous character. Ivan Nikiforovich, on the other hand, wears trousers with such ample folds that if they were blown out you could put the whole courtyard with the barns and barn-buildings into them. Ivan Ivanovich has big expressive snuff-coloured eyes and a mouth rather like the letter V; Ivan Nikiforovich has little yellowish

eyes completely lost between his thick eyebrows and chubby cheeks, and a nose that looks like a ripe plum. If Ivan Ivanovich offers you snuff, he always first licks the lid of the snuff-box, then taps on it with his finger, and, offering it to you, says, if you are someone he knows, "May I make so bold as to ask you to help yourself, sir?" Or if you are someone he does not know, "May I make so bold as to ask you to help yourself, sir, though I have not the honour of knowing your name and your father's and your rank in the service?"

Ivan Nikiforovich puts his horn of snuff straight into your hands and merely adds, "Help yourself." Both Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich greatly dislike fleas, and so neither Ivan Ivanovich nor Ivan Nikiforovich ever let a Jew dealer pass without buying from him various little bottles of an elixir protecting them from those insects, though they abuse him soundly for professing the Jewish faith. In spite of some dissimilarities, however, both Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich are excellent persons.

Chapter II

FROM WHICH WE LEARN THE OBJECT OF IVAN IVANOVICH'S DESIRE, THE SUBJECT OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN IVAN IVANOVICH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVICH, AND IN WHAT WAY IT ENDED

One morning—it was in July—Ivan Ivanovich was lying in the gallery. The day was hot, the air was dry and quivering. Ivan Ivanovich had already been out into the country to see the mowers and the farm, had already questioned the peasants

and the women he met whence they had come, where they were going, how, and when, and why; he was terribly tired and lay down to rest. As he lay down, he looked round at the storehouses, the yard, the barns, the hens running about the yard, and thought to himself: "Good Lord, what a manager I am! What is there that I have not got? Fowls, buildings, barns, everything I want, herb and berry vodka; pears and plum-trees in my orchard; poppies, cabbage, peas in my kitchen garden.... What is there that I have not got?... I should like to know what there is I have not got?"

After putting so profound a question to himself, Ivan Ivanovich sank into thought; meanwhile, his eyes were in search of a new object, and, passing over the fence into Ivan Nikiforovich's yard, were involuntarily caught by a curious spectacle. A lean peasant-woman was carrying out winter clothes, that had been stored away, and hanging them out on a line to air. Soon an old uniform with frayed facings stretched its sleeves out in the air embracing a brocade blouse; after it, a gentleman's dress coat with stamped buttons and a moth-eaten collar displayed itself behind it; white cashmere trousers, covered with stains, which had once been drawn over the legs of Ivan Nikiforovich, though now they could scarcely have been drawn on his fingers. After them other garments in the shape of an inverted V were suspended, then a dark blue Cossack tunic which Ivan Nikiforovich had had made twenty years before when he had been preparing to enter the militia and was already letting his moustaches grow. At last, to put the finishing touch, a sword was displayed that looked like a spire sticking up in the air. Then the skirts of something resembling a fullcoat fluttered, grass-green in colour and with copper buttons as big as a five-kopek piece. From behind peeped a waistcoat trimmed with gold lace and cut low in front. The waistcoat was soon

concealed by the old petticoat of a deceased grandmother with pockets in which one could have stowed a water-melon. All this taken together made up a very interesting spectacle for Ivan Ivanovich, while the sunbeams, catching here and there a blue or a green sleeve, a red facing or a bit of gold brocade, or playing on the sword-spire, turned it into something extraordinary, like the show played in the villages by strolling vagrants, when a crowd of people closely packed looks at King Herod in his golden crown or at Anton leading the goat. Behind the scenes the fiddle squeaks; a gipsy claps his hands on his lips by way of a drum, while the sun is setting and the fresh coolness of the southern night imperceptibly creeps closer to the fresh shoulders and bosoms of the plump village women.

Soon the old woman emerged from the store-room, sighing and groaning as she hauled along an old-fashioned saddle with broken stirrups, with tattered leather cases for pistols, and a saddle-cloth that had once been crimson embroidered in gold and with copper discs. "She is a silly woman!" thought Ivan Ivanovich, "she'll pull out Ivan Nikiforovich to air next!"

And indeed Ivan Ivanovich was not entirely mistaken in this surmise. Five minutes later Ivan Nikiforovich's nankeen trousers were swung up, and filled almost half of the courtyard. After that she brought out his cap and his hunting-gun.

"What is the meaning of it?" thought Ivan Ivanovich. "I have never seen a gun at Ivan Nikiforovich's. What does he want with that? He never shoots, but keeps a gun! What use is it to him? But it is a nice thing! I have been wanting to get one like that for a long time past. I should very much like to have that nice gun; I like to amuse myself with a gun. Hey, woman!" Ivan Ivanovich shouted, beckoning to her.

The old woman went up to the fence.

"What's that you have got there, Granny?"

"You see yourself—a gun."

"What sort of gun?"

"Who can say what sort! If it were mine, I might know, maybe, what it is made of; but it is the master's."

Ivan Ivanovich got up and began examining the gun from every point of view, and even forgot to scold the old woman for hanging it and the sword to air.

"It's made of iron, one would think," the old woman went on.

"Hm! made of iron. Why is it made of iron?" Ivan Ivanovich said to himself. "Has your master had it long?"

"Maybe he has."

"It's a fine thing!" Ivan Ivanovich went on. "I'll ask him to present it to me. What can he do with it? Or I'll swop something for it. I say, Granny, is your master at home?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing, lying down?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's all right, I'll come and see him."

Ivan Ivanovich dressed, took his gnarled stick to keep off the dogs, for there are many more dogs in the streets of Mirgorod than there are men, and went out.

Though Ivan Nikiforovich's courtyard was next to Ivan Ivanovich's and one could climb over the fence from one into the other, yet Ivan Ivanovich went by the street. From the street he had to pass into a lane which was so narrow that if two one-horse carts happened to meet in it, they could not pass, but had to remain in that position until they were each dragged by their back wheels in the opposite direction into the street; as for anyone on foot, he was as apt to be adorned with

burdocks as with flowers. Ivan Ivanovich's cart-shed looked into this lane on the one side, and Ivan Nikiforovich's barn, gates, and dovecot on the other. Ivan Ivanovich went up to the gate and rattled with the latch. Dogs began barking from within, but soon a crowd of various colours ran away, wagging their tails on seeing that it was a person they knew. Ivan Ivanovich crossed the courtyard in which Indian pigeons, fed by Ivan Nikiforovich with his own hand, melon rinds, with here and there green stuff or a broken wheel or hoop off a barrel, or a boy sprawling in a muddy smock—made up a picture such as painters love! The shadow cast by the garments on the clothes-line covered almost the whole courtyard and gave it some degree of coolness. The woman met him with a bow and stood still gaping. Before the house a neat little porch was adorned with a roof on two oak posts—an unreliable shelter from the sun which at that season in the Ukraine shines in deadly earnest and bathes a pedestrian from head to foot in scalding sweat. From this can be seen how strong was Ivan Ivanovich's desire to obtain the indispensable article, since he had even brought himself to break his invariable rule of walking only in the evening by going out at this hour in such heat!

The room into which Ivan Ivanovich stepped was quite dark, because the shutters were closed, and the sunbeam that penetrated through a hole in the shutter was broken into rainbow hues and painted upon the opposite wall a garish landscape of thatched roofs, trees and clothes hanging in the yard, but all the other way round. This made an uncanny twilight in the whole room.

"God's blessing!" said Ivan Ivanovich.

"Ah, good day, Ivan Ivanovich!" answered a voice from the corner of the room. Only then Ivan Ivanovich observed Ivan Nikiforovich lying on a rug spread out upon the floor.

"You must excuse my being in a state of nature." Ivan Nikiforovich was lying without anything on, even his shirt.

"Never mind. Have you slept well today, Ivan Nikiforovich?"

"I have. And have you slept, Ivan Ivanovich?"

"I have."

"So now you have just got up?"

"Just got up? Good gracious, Ivan Nikiforovich! How could I sleep till now! I have just come from the farm. The cornfields along the roadside are splendid! Magnificent! And the hay is so high and soft and golden!"

"Gorpina!" shouted Ivan Nikiforovich. "Bring Ivan Ivanovich some vodka and some pies with sour cream."

"It's a very fine day."

"Don't praise the weather, Ivan Ivanovich. The devil take it! There's no getting away from the heat!"

"So you must bring the devil in. Ivan Nikiforovich! you will remember my words, but then it will be too late; you will suffer in the next world for your ungodly language."

"What have I done to offend you, Ivan Ivanovich? I've not referred to your father or your mother. I don't know in what way I have offended you!"

"That's enough, that's enough, Ivan Nikiforovich!"

"Upon my soul I have done nothing to offend you, Ivan Ivanovich!"

"It's strange that the quails still don't come at the bird-call."

"You may think what you like, but I have done nothing to offend you."

"I don't know why it is they don't come," said Ivan Ivanovich as though he did not hear Ivan Nikiforovich. "Whether it is not quite time yet ... though the weather one would think is just right."

"You say the cornfields are good...."

"Magnificent! Magnificent!"

Then followed a silence.

"How is it you are hanging the clothes out, Ivan Nikiforovich?" Ivan Ivanovich said at last.

"Yes, that damned woman has let splendid clothes, almost new, get mildewy; now I am airing them; it's excellent fine cloth, they only need turning and I can wear them again."

"I liked one thing there, Ivan Nikiforovich!"

"What's that?"

"Tell me, please, what do you want that gun for that's been hung out to air with the clothes?" At this point Ivan Ivanovich held out a snuff-box. "May I beg you to help yourself?"

"Not at all, you help yourself. I'll take a pinch of my own." With this Ivan Nikiforovich felt about him and got hold of his horn. "There's a silly woman! So she has hung the gun out, too, has she? Capital snuff the Jew makes in Sorochintsy. I don't know what he puts in it, but it's so fragrant! It's a little like balsam. Here, take some, chew a little in your mouth. Isn't it like balsam? Do take some, help yourself!"

"Please tell me, Ivan Nikiforovich, I am still harping on the gun: what are you going to do with it? It's of no use to you."

"No use to me, but what if I go shooting?"

"Lord bless you, Ivan Nikiforovich, whenever will you go shooting? At the Second Coming perhaps? You have never yet killed a single duck as far as I know and as others tell me, and you have not been created by the Lord for shooting. You have a dignified figure and deportment. How could you go trailing about the bogs when that article of your apparel which it is not quite seemly to mention is now hung out on the line for airing? What would it be like then? No, what you want is rest and peace." (Ivan Ivanovich as we have mentioned already was extremely picturesque in his speech when he

wanted to persuade anyone. How he talked! Goodness, how he talked!) "Yes, you must behave accordingly. Listen, give it to me!"

"What an idea! It's an expensive gun. You can't get guns like that nowadays. I bought it from a Turk when I was enrolling into the militia; and to think of giving it away now all of a sudden! Impossible! It's an indispensable thing!"

"What is it indispensable for?"

"What for? Why, if burglars should break into the house?... Not indispensable, indeed! Now, thank God, my mind is at rest and I am afraid of nobody. And why? Because I know I have a gun in my cupboard."

"A fine gun! Why, Ivan Nikiforovich, the lock is spoilt."

"What if it is spoilt? It can be repaired; it only needs a little hemp oil to get the rust off."

"I see no kind feeling for me in your words, Ivan Nikiforovich. You won't do anything to show your goodwill."

"What do you mean, Ivan Ivanovich, saying I show you no goodwill? Aren't you ashamed? Your oxen graze on my meadow and I have never once interfered with them. When you go to Poltava you always ask me for my trap, and have I ever refused it? Your little boys climb over the fence into my yard and play with my dogs—I say nothing. Let them play, so long as they don't touch anything! Let them play!"

"Since you don't care to give it me, perhaps you might exchange it for something?"

"What will you give me for it?" With this Ivan Nikiforovich sat up, leaning on his elbow, and looked at Ivan Ivanovich.

"I'll give you the grey sow, the one that I fed up in the sty. A splendid sow! You'll see if she won't give you a litter of sucking-pigs next year."

"I don't know how you can suggest that, Ivan Ivanovich.

What use is your sow to me? Am I going to give a wake for the devil?"

"Again! You must keep bringing the devil in! It's a sin, it really is a sin, Ivan Nikiforovich!"

"How could you really, Ivan Ivanovich, give me for the gun the devil knows what—a sow?"

"Why is she the devil knows what, Ivan Nikiforovich?"

"Why is she? I should think you might know that for yourself. This is a gun, a thing everyone knows; while that—the devil only knows what to call it—is a sow! If it had not been you speaking, I might have taken it as an insult."

"What fault have you found in the sow?"

"What do you take me for? That I should take a pig?..."

"Sit still, sit still! I will say no more.... You may keep your gun, let it rust and rot standing in the corner of the cupboard—I don't want to speak of it again."

A silence followed upon that.

"They say," began Ivan Ivanovich, "that three kings have declared war on our Tsar."

"Yes, Pyotr Fyodorovich told me about it. What does it mean? And what's the war about?"

"There is no saying for certain, Ivan Nikiforovich, what it's about. I imagine that the kings want us all to accept the Turkish faith."

"My word, the fools, what a thing to want!" Ivan Nikiforovich commented, raising his head.

"So our Tsar has declared war on them for that. 'No,' he says, 'you accept the Christian faith!'"

"Well, our fellows will beat them up, Ivan Ivanovich, won't they?"

"They certainly will. So you won't exchange the gun, Ivan Nikiforovich?"

"I wonder at you, Ivan Ivanovich: I believe you are a man noted for your culture and education, but you talk like a boy. Why should I be such a fool? . . ."

"Sit still, sit still. God bless the thing! Plague take it; I won't speak of it again."

At that moment some snack was brought in. Ivan Ivanovich drank a glass of vodka and ate a pie with sour cream.

"I say, Ivan Nikiforovich, I'll give you two sacks of oats besides the sow; you have not sown any oats, you know. You would have to buy oats this year, anyway."

"Upon my soul, Ivan Ivanovich, one must get a bellyful of peas before talking to you." (That was nothing; Ivan Nikiforovich would let off phrases worse than that.) "Who has ever heard of swopping a gun for two sacks of oats? I'll be bound you won't offer your *bekesha*."

"But you forget, Ivan Nikiforovich, I am giving you the sow, too."

"What, two sacks of oats and a sow for the gun!"

"Why, isn't it enough?"

"For the gun?"

"Of course for the gun!"

"Two sacks for the gun?"

"Two sacks, not empty, but full of oats; and have you forgotten the sow?"

"You can go and kiss your sow or the devil, if you prefer him!"

"Oh! You'll see, your tongue will be pierced with red-hot needles for such ungody sayings. One has to wash one's face and hands and fumigate oneself after talking to you."

"Excuse me, Ivan Ivanovich: a gun is a gentlemanly thing, a very interesting entertainment, besides being a very agreeable ornament to a room. . . ."

"You go on about your gun, Ivan Nikiforovich, like a fool with a gaudy bag," said Ivan Ivanovich with annoyance, for he was really beginning to feel cross.

"And you, Ivan Ivanovich, are a regular gander."

If Ivan Nikiforovich had not uttered that word, they would have quarrelled and have parted friends as they always did; but now something quite different happened. Ivan Ivanovich turned crimson.

"What was that you said, Ivan Nikiforovich?" he asked, raising his voice.

"I said you were like a gander, Ivan Ivanovich!"

"How dare you, sir, forget propriety and respect for a man's rank and family and insult him with such an infamous name?"

"What is there infamous about it? And why are you waving your hands about like that, Ivan Ivanovich?"

"I repeat, how dare you, regardless of every rule of propriety, call me a gander?"

"Hoity-toity, Ivan Ivanovich! What are you in such a cackle about?"

Ivan Ivanovich could no longer control himself; his lips were quivering; his mouth lost its usual resemblance to the letter V and was transformed into an O; his eyes blinked fearfully. This was extremely rare with Ivan Ivanovich; he had to be greatly exasperated to be brought to this pass. "Then I beg to inform you," Ivan Ivanovich articulated, "that I do not want to know you."

"No great loss! Upon my word, I shan't weep for that!" answered Ivan Nikiforovich.

He was lying, upon my soul he was! He was very much upset by it.

"I will never set foot in your house again."

"Aha, ah!" said Ivan Nikiforovich, so vexed that he did not

know what he was doing, and, contrary to his habit, he rose to his feet. "Hey, woman, lad!" At this the same lean old woman and a small boy muffled in a long and full overcoat appeared in the doorway.

"Take Ivan Ivanovich by the arms and lead him out of the door!"

"What! A gentleman!" Ivan Ivanovich cried out indignantly, full of a sense of injured dignity. "Don't you dare to approach or I will annihilate you together with your stupid master! The very crows will not find your place!" (Ivan Ivanovich used to speak with extraordinary force when his soul was agitated.)

The whole group presented a striking picture: Ivan Nikiforovich, standing in the middle of the room in full beauty completely unadorned! The serving-woman, with her mouth wide open and an utterly senseless terror-stricken expression on her face! Ivan Ivanovich, as the Roman tribunes are depicted, with one arm raised! It was an extraordinary moment, a magnificent spectacle! And meanwhile there was but one spectator; that was the boy in an enormous overcoat, who stood very tranquilly picking his nose.

At last Ivan Ivanovich took his cap.

"Very nice behaviour on your part, Ivan Nikiforovich! Excellent! I will not let you forget it!"

"Go along, Ivan Ivanovich, go along! And mind you don't cross my path. If you do, I will smash your ugly face, Ivan Ivanovich!"

"So much for that, Ivan Nikiforovich," answered Ivan Ivanovich, putting his thumb to his nose and slamming the door, which squeaked huskily and sprang open again.

Ivan Nikiforovich appeared in the doorway and tried to add something, but Ivan Ivanovich flew out of the yard without looking back.

Chapter III

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE QUARREL OF IVAN IVANOV CH AND IVAN N KIFORO CH

And so two worthy men, the honour and ornament of Mirgorod, had quarrelled! And over what? Over a trifle, over a gander. They refused to see each other, and broke off all relations, though they had hitherto been known as the most inseparable friends! Hitherto Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich had sent every day to inquire after each other's health, and used often to converse together from their respective balconies and would say such agreeable things to each other that it warmed the heart to hear them.

On Sundays, Ivan Ivanovich in his *bekesha*, and Ivan Nikiforovich in his yellowish-brown nankeen Cossack tunic, used to set off to church almost arm in arm. And if Ivan Ivanovich, who had extremely sharp eyes, first noticed a puddle or filth of any sort in the middle of the street—a thing which sometimes does happen in Mirgorod—he would always say to Ivan Nikiforovich, "Be careful, don't put your foot down here, for it is unpleasant." Ivan Nikiforovich for his part, too, showed the most touching signs of affection, and, however far off he might be standing, always stretched out his hand with his horn of snuff and said, "Help yourself!" And how capitally they both managed their lands! . . . And now these two friends. . . . I was thunder struck when I heard of it! For a long time I refused to believe it.

Merciful Heavens! Ivan Ivanovich has quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich! Such estimable men! Is there anything in this world one can depend on after that?

When Ivan Ivanovich reached home he was for a long time

in a state of violent agitation. It was his habit to go first of all to the stable to see whether the mare was eating her hay (Ivan Ivanovich had a roan mare with a bald patch on her forehead, a very good little beast); then to feed the turkeys and sucking-pigs out of his own hand, and only then to go indoors, where he either made wooden bowls (he was very skilful, as good as a turner, at carving things out of wood), or would read a book published by Lyuby, Gary and Popov (Ivan Ivanovich did not remember the title of it, because the servant-girl had long ago torn off the upper part of the title-page to amuse a child with it), or would rest in the gallery. Now he paid no heed to any of his usual occupations. Instead, on meeting Gapka he began scolding her for dawdling about doing nothing, though she was dragging grain into the kitchen; he threw his stick at the cock which came to the front steps for its usual tribute; and when a grubby little boy in a tattered shirt ran up to him, shouting, "Daddy, daddy! give me a cake!" he threatened him and stamped his foot so alarmingly that the terrified boy took to his heels.

At last, however, he recovered himself and began to follow his usual pursuits. He sat down to dinner late, and it was almost evening when he lay down to rest in the gallery. The good borshch with pigeons in it which Gapka had cooked completely effaced the incident of the morning. Ivan Ivanovich again began to examine his garden and household with pleasure. At last his eyes rested on the neighbouring courtyard and he said to himself: "I haven't been to see Ivan Nikiforovich today; I'll go round to him." Saying this, Ivan Ivanovich took his stick and his cap and went out into the street; but he had scarcely walked out of the gate when he remembered the quarrel, spat on the ground, and turned back. Almost the same took place in Ivan Nikiforovich's yard. Ivan Ivanovich saw the serving-woman put her foot on the fence with the intention of climbing over into

his yard, when suddenly the voice of Ivan Nikiforovich was audible, shouting, "Come back, come back! No need!"

Ivan Ivanovich felt very dreary, however. It might very well have happened that these worthy men would have been reconciled the very next day, had not a particular event in the house of Ivan Nikiforovich destroyed every hope of reconciliation and poured oil on the fire of resentment when it was on the point of going out.

On the evening of the very same day Agafya Fedoseyevna arrived on a visit to Ivan Nikiforovich. Agafya Fedoseyevna was neither a relative, nor a sister-in-law, nor, indeed, any connection of Ivan Nikiforovich's. One would have thought that she had absolutely no reason to visit him, and he was, indeed, not particularly pleased to see her. She did visit him, however, and used to stay with him for whole weeks at a time and occasionally longer, indeed. Then she carried off the keys and took the whole housekeeping into her own hands. This was very disagreeable to Ivan Nikiforovich, but, strange to say, he obeyed her like a child, and though he attempted sometimes to quarrel with her, Agafya Fedoseyevna always got the best of it.

I must own I do not understand why it has been ordained that women should take us by the nose as easily as they take hold of the handle of the teapot: either their hands are so created or our noses are fit for nothing better. And although Ivan Nikiforovich's nose was rather like a plum, she took him by that nose and made him follow her about like a little dog. Indeed, he reluctantly changed his whole manner of life when she was there: he did not lie so long in the sun, and when he did lie there, it was not in a state of nature; he always put on his shirt and his trousers, though Agafya Fedoseyevna was far from insisting upon it. She was not one to stand on ceremony, and when Ivan Nikiforovich had a feverish attack, she used to rub him

herself with her own hands from head to foot with vinegar and turpentine. Agafya Fedoseyevna wore a cap on her head, three warts on her nose, and a coffee-coloured dressing-gown with yellow flowers on it. Her whole figure resembled a tub, and so it was as hard to find her waist as to see one's nose without a looking-glass. Her legs were very short and shaped on the pattern of two cushions. She used to talk scandal and eat boiled beetroot in the mornings, and was a wonderful hand at scolding; and through all these varied pursuits, her face never for one moment changed its expression, a strange peculiarity as a rule found only in women.

As soon as she arrived, everything was turned upside down. "Don't you be reconciled with him, Ivan Nikiforovich, and don't you beg his pardon; he wants to be your ruin; he is that sort of man! You don't know him!" The damned woman went whispering on and on, till she brought Ivan Nikiforovich to such a state that he would not hear Ivan Ivanovich's name.

Everything assumed a different aspect. If the neighbour's dog ran into the yard, it was whacked with whatever was handy; if the children climbed over the fence, they came back howling with their little grubby shirts held up and marks of a switch on their backs. Even the very serving-woman, when Ivan Ivanovich would have asked her some question, was so rude that Ivan Ivanovich, a man of extreme refinement, could only spit and say, "What a nasty woman! Worse than her master!"

At last to put the finishing touches to all his offences, the detested neighbour put up directly opposite, at the spot where the fence was usually climbed, a goose-pen, as though with special design to emphasize the insult. This revolting pen was put up with diabolical rapidity in a single day.

This excited fury and a desire for revenge in Ivan Ivanovich. He did not, however, show any sign of annoyance, although

part of the pen was actually on his land; but his heart throbbed so violently that it was extremely hard for him to maintain this outward composure.

So he spent the day. Night came on.... Oh, if I were a painter how wonderfully I would portray the charm of the night! I would picture all Mirgorod aslumber; the countless stars looking down on it; the quiet streets resounding with the barking of the dogs far and near; the lovesick sacristan hastening by them climbing over a fence with chivalrous fearlessness; the white walls of the houses still whiter in the moonlight, while the trees that canopy them are darker, the shadows cast by the trees blacker, the flowers and silent grass more fragrant; while from every corner the crickets, the indefatigable minstrels of the night, set up their churring song in unison. I would describe how in one of those low-pitched clay houses a dark-browed maiden, tossing on her solitary bed, her young breast heaving, dreams of a hussar's spurs and moustache, while the moonlight smiles on her cheeks. I would describe how the black shadow of a bat that settled on the white chimneys flits across the white road.... But I could hardly have depicted Ivan Ivanovich as he went out that night with a saw in his hand, so many were the different emotions written on his countenance! Quietly, stealthily, he slunk up and crept under the goose-pen. Ivan Nikiforovich's dogs knew nothing as yet of the quarrel between them, and so allowed him as a friend to approach the pen, which stood firmly on four oak posts. Creeping up to the nearest post, he put the saw to it and began sawing. The noise of the saw made him look round every minute, but the thought of the insult revived his courage. The first post was sawn through; Ivan Ivanovich set to work on the second. His eyes were burning and could see nothing for terror. All at once he uttered a cry and almost fainted; he thought he saw a corpse, but soon he recovered on perceiving that it was the

goose, craning its neck at him. Ivan Ivanovich spat with indignation and went on with his work again. The second post, too, was sawn through; the goose-house tottered. Ivan Ivanovich's heart began beating so violently as he attacked the third post that several times he had to stop. More than half of the post was sawn through when all at once the tottering pen gave a violent lurch.... Ivan Ivanovich barely had time to leap aside when it came down with a crash. Snatching up the saw in a terrible panic he ran home and flung himself on his bed, without even courage to look out of the window at the results of his terrible act. He fancied that all Ivan Nikiforovich's household were assembled: the old serving-woman, Ivan Nikiforovich, the boy in the immense overcoat, were allled by Agafya Fedoseyevna, coming with cudgels to break down and smash his house.

Ivan Ivanovich passed all the following day in a kind of fever. He kept fancying that in revenge his detested neighbour would set fire to his house at least; and so he gave Gapka orders to keep a continual look-out to see whether dry straw had been put down anywhere. At last, to anticipate Ivan Nikiforovich, he made up his mind to be ahead of him and to lodge a complaint against him in the Mirgorod district court. What this meant the reader may learn from the following chapter.

Chapter IV

WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE MIRGOROD DISTRICT COURT

Mirgorod is a delightful town. There are all sorts of buildings in it. Some thatched with straw and some with reeds, some even with a wooden roof. A street to the right, a street to the left, everywhere an excellent fence; over it twines the hop,

upon it hang pots and pans, behind it the sunflower displays its sun-like head and one catches glimpses of red poppies and fat pumpkins.... Splendid! The fence is always adorned with objects which make it still more picturesque—a check petticoat stretched out on it or a shirt or trousers. There is no thieving or roguery in Mirgorod, and so everyone hangs on his fence what he thinks fit. If you come to the square, you will certainly stop for a moment to admire the view. There is a pool in it—a wonderful pool! You have never seen one like it! It fills up almost the whole square. A lovely pool! The houses, which might in the distance be taken for haystacks, stand round admiring its beauty.

But to my thinking there is no better house than the district court. Whether it is built of oak or birch-wood does not matter to me, but, honoured friends, there are eight windows in it! Eight windows in a row, looking straight on the square and on to that stretch of water of which I have spoken already and which the mayor calls the lake! It is the only one painted the colour of granite; all the other houses in Mirgorod are simply whitewashed. Its roof is all made of wood and would, indeed, have been painted red, if the oil intended for that purpose had not been eaten by the office clerks with onions, for, as luck would have it, it was Lent; and so the roof was left unpainted. There are steps leading out to the square, and the hens often run up them, because there are almost always grains or other things eatable scattered on the steps; this is not done on purpose, however, but simply from the carelessness of the petitioners coming to the court. The building is divided into two parts: in the one is the court, in the other is the lock-up. In the first part, there are two clean, whitewashed rooms; one—the outer room for petitioners to wait in, while in the other there is a table adorned with ink spots; on the table stands a looking-

glass; there are four oak chairs with high backs, and along the walls stand iron-bound chests in which the records of the law-suits of the district are piled up. On one of these chests a boot polished with blacking was standing at the moment.

The court had been sitting since early morning. The judge, a rather stout man, though considerably thinner than Ivan Nikiforovich, with a good-natured face and in a greasy robe, was talking over a pipe and a cup of tea with the court assessor. The judge's lips were close under his nose, and so his nose could sniff his upper lip to his heart's content. This upper lip served him instead of a snuff-box, for the snuff aimed at his nose almost always settled upon it. And so the judge was talking to the court assessor. At one side a bare-footed wench was holding a trayful of cups. At the end of the table the secretary was reading the summing-up of a case, but in such a monotonous and depressing tone that the very man whose case it was would have fallen asleep listening to him. The judge would no doubt have been the first to do so if he had not been engaged in an interesting conversation.

"I purposely tried to find out," said the judge, taking a sip of tea, though the cup was by now cold, "how they manage to make them sing so well. I had a capital blackbird two years ago. And do you know, it suddenly went off completely and began singing all anyhow; it got worse and worse; it took to lisping, wheezing—good for nothing! And you know, it was because of the merest trifle! I'll tell you how it's done. A little pimple no bigger than a pea grows under the throat. This must be pricked with a needle. I was told that by Zakhar Prokofyevich, and if you like I'll tell you just how it happened: I was going to see him—"

"Am I to read the second, Demyan Demyanovich?" the secretary, who had finished reading some minutes before, broke in.

"Oh, have you finished it already? Fancy, how quick you have been! I haven't heard a word of it! But where is it? Give it to me! I'll sign it! What else have you got there?"

"The case of the Cossack Bokitko's stolen cow."

"Very good, read away! Well, so I arrived at his house.... I can even tell you exactly what he gave me. With the vodka some sturgeon was served, unique! Yes, not like the sturgeon..." (at this the judge clicked his tongue and smiled, while his nose sniffed his invariable snuff-box) "... to which our Mirgorod shop treats us. I didn't taste the herring because, as you are aware, it gives me heartburn; but I tried the caviare—splendid caviare! there can be no two words about it, superb! Then I drank peach-vodka drawn with centaury. There was saffron-vodka, too; but, as you are aware, I never touch it. It's very nice you know; it whets the appetite before a meal, they say, and puts a finishing touch afterwards.... Ah! what do my ears hear, what do my eyes behold!..." the judge cried out all at once on seeing Ivan Ivanovich walk in.

"God be with you! I wish you good health!" Ivan Ivanovich pronounced, bowing in all directions with the urbanity which was his peculiar characteristic. My goodness, how he could fascinate us all with his manners! I have never seen such refinement anywhere. He was very well aware of his own consequence, and so looked upon the universal respect in which he was held as his due. The judge himself handed Ivan Ivanovich a chair, his nose drew in all the snuff from his upper lip, which was always a sign with him of great satisfaction.

"What may I offer you, Ivan Ivanovich?" he inquired. "Will you take a cup of tea?"

"No, thank you very much!" answered Ivan Ivanovich; and he bowed and sat down.

"Oh, pray do, just a cup!" repeated the judge.

"No, thank you. Very grateful for your hospitality!" answered Ivan Ivanovich. He bowed and sat down.

"Just one cup!" repeated the judge.

"Oh, do not trouble, Demyan Demyanovich!" At this Ivan Ivanovich bowed and sat down.

"One little cup?"

"Well, perhaps just one cup!" pronounced Ivan Ivanovich, and he reached for the cup on the tray.

Merciful heavens! The height of refinement in that man! There is no describing the pleasing impression made by such manners!

"Mayn't I offer you another cup?"

"No, thank you very much!" answered Ivan Ivanovich, putting the cup turned upside down upon the tray and bowing.

"To please me, Ivan Ivanovich!"

"I cannot; I thank you!" With this Ivan Ivanovich bowed and sat down.

"Ivan Ivanovich! Come now, as a friend, just one cup!"

"No, very much obliged for your kindness!" Saying this, Ivan Ivanovich bowed and sat down.

"Just one cup! One cup!"

Ivan Ivanovich took a cup.

Well, I am blessed! How that man could keep up his dignity!

"I have," said Ivan Ivanovich, after drinking the last drop, "urgent business with you, Demyan Demyanovich: I wish to lodge a complaint." With this Ivan Ivanovich put down his cup and took from his pocket a sheet of stamped paper covered with writing. "A complaint against my enemy, my sworn foe."

"Against whom is that?"

"Against Ivan Nikiforovich Dovgochkhun!"

At these words the judge almost fell off his chair. "What are you saying!" he articulated, flinging up his hands. "Ivan Ivanovich! is this really you?"

"You can see for yourself it is I!"

"The Lord be with you and all the Holy Saints! What! You, Ivan Ivanovich, have become the enemy of Ivan Nikiforovich! Was it your lips uttered those words? Say it again! Was not someone hiding behind you and speaking with your voice?..."

"What is there so incredible in it? I cannot bear the sight of him: he has done me a deadly injury, he has insulted my honour!"

"Holy Trinity! How shall I ever tell my mother? She, poor old dear, says every day when my sister and I quarrel, 'You live like cats and dogs, children. If only you would take example from Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich: once friends, always friends! To be sure they are friends! To be sure they are excellent people!' Fine friends after all! Tell me what's it all about? How is it?"

"It's a delicate matter, Demyan Demyanovich! It cannot be told by word of mouth; better bid your secretary read my petition."

"Read it aloud, Taras Tikhonovich!" said the judge, turning to the secretary. Taras Tikhonovich took the petition and, blowing his nose as all secretaries in district courts do blow their noses, that is, with the help of two fingers, began reading:

> "From Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, gentleman and landowner of the Mirgorod district, a petition; whereof the following points ensue:

"(1) The gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, notorious to all the world for his godless lawfully-criminal actions which overstep all bounds and provoke aversion, did, on the seventh day of July of the present year 1810, perpetrate a deadly insult upon me, both personally affecting my honour

and likewise for the humiliation and confusion of my rank and family. The said gentleman is, moreover, of loathsome appearance, has a quarrelsome temper, and abounds with blasphemous and abusive words of every description. . . ."

Here the reader made a slight pause to blow his nose again, while the judge folded his arms with a feeling of reverence and said to himself, "What a smart pen! Lord have mercy on us! How the man does write!"

Ivan Ivanovich begged the secretary to read on, and Taras Tikhonovich continued:

"The said gentleman, Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, when I went to him with friendly propositions called me publicly by an insulting name derogatory to my honour, to wit, 'gander,' though it is well known to all the district of Mirgorod that I have never had the name of that disgusting animal and do not intend to be so named in the future. The proof of my gentle origin is the fact that in the register in the Church of the Three Holy Bishops, there are recorded both the day of my birth and likewise the name given me in baptism. A 'gander,' as all who have any knowledge whatever of science are aware, cannot be inscribed in the register, seeing that a 'gander' is not a man but a bird, a fact thoroughly well known to everyone, even though he may not have been to a seminary. But the aforesaid pernicious gentleman, though fully aware of all this, abused me with the aforesaid foul name for no other purpose than to inflict a deadly insult to my rank and station.

"(2) This same unmannerly and ungentlemanly gentleman has inflicted damage, moreover, upon my private property, inherited by me from my father of the clerical calling, Ivan of blessed memory, son of Onisim Pererepenko, inasmuch as in contravention of every law he has moved a goose-pen precisely opposite my front entrance, which was done with no other design

but to emphasize the insult paid me, forasmuch as the said goose-pen had till then been standing in a suitable place and was fairly solid. But the abominable design of the aforesaid gentleman was solely to compel me to witness unseemly incidents, forasmuch as it is well known that no man goes into a pen, above all a goose-pen, for any seemly purpose. In carrying out this illegal action two foremost posts have trespassed upon my private property, which passed into my possession in the lifetime of my father, Ivan of blessed memory, son of Onisim Pererepenko, which runs in a straight line from the barn to the place where the women wash their pots.

"(3) The gentleman described above, whose very name inspires aversion, cherishes in his heart the wicked design of setting fire to me in my own house. Whereof unmistakable signs are manifest from what follows: in the first place, the said pernicious gentleman has taken to emerging frequently from his apartments, which he never did in the past by reason of his slothfulness and the repulsive corpulence of his person; in the second place, in the servants' quarters adjoining the very fence which is the boundary of my land, inherited by me from my late father, Ivan of blessed memory, son of Onisim Pererepenko, there is a light burning every day and for an exceptional length of time, which same is manifest proof thereof, inasmuch as hitherto through his niggardly stinginess not only the tallow candle but even the little oil-lamp was always put out.

"And therefore I petition that the said gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, as being guilty of arson, of insulting my rank, name and family, and of covetously appropriating my property, and above all of the vulgar and reprehensible coupling with my name the title of 'gander,' be condemned to a fine together with all costs and expenses, and himself be thrown into fetters as a law-breaker, and put in the prison

of the town, and that this my petition may meet with prompt and immediate attention. Written and composed by Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, gentleman and landowner of Mirgorod."

When the petition had been read, the judge drew nearer to Ivan Ivanovich, took hold of his button and began addressing him in somewhat this fashion, "What are you about, Ivan Ivanovich? Have some fear of God! Withdraw the petition, deuce take it! (Satan bedevil it!) Much better shake hands with Ivan Nikiforovich and kiss him, and buy some Santurin or Nikopol wine or simply make some punch and invite me! We'll have a good drink together and forget it all!"

"No, Demyan Demyanovich, this is not a matter," said Ivan Ivanovich with the dignity which always suited him so well, "this is not a matter which admits of an amicable settlement. Good-bye! Good-bye to you, too, gentlemen!" he continued with the same dignity, turning to the rest of the company. "I trust that the necessary steps will in due course be taken in accordance with my petition." And he went out, leaving everyone present in amazement.

The judge sat without saying a word; the secretary took a pinch of snuff; the clerks upset the broken bottle which served them for an inkstand, and the judge himself was so absent-minded that he enlarged the pool of ink on the table with his finger.

"What do you say to this, Dorofei Trofimovich?" said the judge after a brief silence, turning to the assessor.

"I say nothing," said the assessor.

"What things people do!" the judge went on. He had hardly uttered the words when the door creaked and the foremost half of Ivan Nikiforovich landed in the office—the remainder of him was still in the hall. That Ivan Nikiforovich should appear, and in the court, too, seemed so extraordinary that the judge

cried out, the secretary interrupted his reading, one clerk, in a frieze semblance of a dress coat, put his pen in his lips, while another swallowed a fly. Even the veteran with a stripe on his shoulder who discharged the duties of messenger and house-porter, and who had hitherto been standing at the door scratching himself under his dirty shirt—even he gaped and trod on somebody's foot.

"What fate has brought you? How and why? How are you, Ivan Nikiforovich?"

But Ivan Nikiforovich was more dead than alive, for he had stuck in the doorway and could take a step neither backwards nor forwards. In vain did the judge shout to anyone who might be in the waiting-room to shove Ivan Nikiforovich from behind into the court. There was nobody in the waiting-room but an old woman who had come with a petition, and in spite of all her efforts she could do nothing with her bony hands. Then one of the clerks, a broad-shouldered fellow with thick lips and a thick nose, with a drunken look in his squinting eyes, and ragged elbows, approached the foremost half of Ivan Nikiforovich, folded the latter's arms across his chest as though he were a baby, and winked to the veteran, who shoved with his knee in Ivan Nikiforovich's belly, and in spite of the latter's piteous moans he was squeezed out into the waiting-room. Then they drew back the bolts and opened the second half of the door, during which operation the united efforts and heavy breathing of the clerk and his assistant, the veteran, diffused such a powerful odour about the room that the court seemed transformed for a time into a pot-house.

"I hope you are not hurt, Ivan Nikiforovich? I'll tell my mother and she'll send you a lotion; you only rub it on your back and it will all pass off."

But Ivan Nikiforovich flopped into a chair, and except for

prolonged sighs and groans could say nothing. At last in a faint voice hardly audible from exhaustion he brought out, "Would you like some?" and taking his snuff-horn from his pocket added: "Take some, help yourself!"

"Delighted to see you," answered the judge, "but still I cannot imagine what has led you to take so much trouble and to oblige us with such an agreeable surprise."

"A petition..." was all Ivan Nikiforovich could articulate.

"A petition? What sort of petition?"

"A complaint...." (Here breathlessness led to a prolonged pause.) "Oh!... a complaint against that scoundrel ... Ivan Ivanovich Pererepenko!"

"Good Lord! You at it too! Such rare friends! A complaint against such an exemplary man!..."

"He is the devil himself!" Ivan Nikiforovich pronounced abruptly.

The judge crossed himself.

"Here's my petition, read it!"

"There is no help for it, read it aloud, Taras Tikhonovich," said the judge, addressing the secretary with an expression of displeasure, though his nose unconsciously sniffed his upper lip, which it commonly did only from great satisfaction. Such perversity on the part of his nose caused the judge even more vexation; he took out his handkerchief and swept from his upper lip all the snuff, to punish its insolence.

The secretary, after going through his usual performance, which he invariably did before beginning to read, that is, blowing his nose without the assistance of a pocket-handkerchief, began in his ordinary voice, as follows:

"The petition of Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, gentleman of the Mirgorod district, whereof the following points ensue:

"(1) Whereas by his spiteful hatred and undisguised ill-will, the self-styled gentleman Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, is committing all sorts of mean, injurious, malicious and shocking actions against me, and yesterday, like a robber and a thief, broke—with axes, saws, chisels and all sorts of carpenter's tools—at night into my yard and into my private pen situated therein, and with his own hand, infamously hacked it to pieces, whereas on my side I had given no cause whatever for so lawless and burglarious a proceeding.

"(2) The said gentleman Pererepenko has designs upon my life and, concealing the said designs until the seventh of last month, came to me and began in cunning and friendly fashion begging from me a gun, which stands in my room, and with his characteristic meanness offered me for it many worthless things such as a grey sow and two measures of oats. But, guessing his criminal designs at the time, I tried in every way to dissuade him therefrom; but the aforesaid blackguard and scoundrel, Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, swore at me like a peasant and from that day has cherished an implacable hostility towards me. Moreover, the often afore-mentioned ferocious gentleman and brigand Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, is of a very ignoble origin: his sister was known to all the world as a strumpet, and left the place with the regiment stationed five years ago at Mirgorod and registered her husband as a peasant; his father and mother, too, were exceedingly lawless people, and both were incredible drunkards. But the afore-mentioned gentleman and robber, Pererepenko, has surpassed all his family in his beastly and reprehensible behaviour, and under a show of piety is guilty of the most profligate conduct: he does not keep the fast, seeing that on St. Philip's Eve the godless man bought a sheep and next day bade his illegitimate wench Gapka slaughter it, alleging that he had need at once of tallow for lamps and candles.

"Wherefore I petition that the said gentleman may, as guilty of robbery, sacrilege and cheating, and caught in the act of theft and burglary, be thrown into fetters and cast into the lock-up of the town or prison of the province, and there, as may seem best, after being deprived of his grades and nobility, be soundly flogged and be sent to hard labour in Siberia if need be, and be ordered to pay all costs and expenses, and that this my petition may receive immediate attention. To this petition Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, gentleman of the Mirgorod district, herewith puts his hand."

As soon as the secretary had finished reading, Ivan Nikiforovich picked up his cap and bowed with the intention of going away.

"Where are you off to, Ivan Nikiforovich?" the judge called after him. "Do stay a little! Have some tea! Oryshko! Don't you stand there, silly girl, winking at the clerks! Go and bring some tea!"

But Ivan Nikiforovich, terrified at having come so far from home and having endured so dangerous a quarantine, was already through the doorway saying, "Don't put yourself out, with pleasure I'll—" and he shut the door after him, leaving all the court in amazement.

There was no help for it. Both petitions had been received and the case seemed likely to awaken considerable interest, when an unforeseen circumstance gave it an even more remarkable character. When the judge had gone out of the court, accompanied by the assessor and the secretary, and the clerks were stowing away into a sack the various fowls, eggs, pies, rolls and other trifles brought by the petitioners, the grey sow ran into the room and, to the surprise of all present, seized—not a pie or a crust of bread, but Ivan Nikiforovich's petition, which was lying at the end of the table with its pages hanging over the edge. Snatching

up the petition, the grey grunter ran out so quickly that not one of the clerks could overtake her, in spite of the rulers and ink-pots that were thrown after her.

This extraordinary incident caused a terrible commotion, because they had not taken a copy of the petition. The judge, his secretary, and the assessor spent a long time arguing over this unprecedented event; at last it was decided to write a report on it to the mayor, since proceedings in this matter were more the concern of the city police. The report, No. 389, was sent to him the same day and led to rather an interesting explanation, of which the reader may learn from the next chapter.

Chapter V

DESCRIBING A CONSULTATION BETWEEN TWO PERSONAGES HIGHLY RESPECTED IN MIRGOROD

Ivan Ivanovich had only just seen after his household duties and gone out, as his habit was, to lie down in the gallery, when to his unutterable surprise he saw something red at the garden gate. It was the mayor's red cuff which, like his collar, had acquired a glaze, and at the edges was being transformed into polished leather. Ivan Ivanovich thought to himself, "It's just as well that Pyotr Fyodorovich has come for a little talk"; but he was much surprised to see the mayor walking extremely fast and waving his arms, which he did not do as a rule. There were eight buttons on the mayor's uniform; the ninth had been torn off during the procession at the consecration of the church two years before, and the police-constables had not yet been able to find it, though when the superintendents presented

the mayor with their daily reports he invariably inquired whether the button had been found. These eight buttons had been sewn on as peasant-women sow beans, one to the right and the next to the left. His left leg had been struck by a bullet in his last campaign, and so, as he limped along, he flung it so far to one side that it almost cancelled all the work done by the right leg. The more rapidly the mayor forced the march the less he advanced, and so, while he was approaching the porch, Ivan Ivanovich had time enough to lose himself in conjecture why the mayor was waving his arms so vigorously. This interested him the more as he thought the latter's business must be of exceptional importance, since he was actually wearing his new sword.

"Good day, Pyotr Fyodorovich!" cried Ivan Ivanovich, who, as we have said already, was very inquisitive and could not restrain his impatience at the sight of the mayor attacking the step, still not raising his eyes, but struggling with his unruly members which were utterly unable to take the step at one assault.

"A very good day to my dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovich!" answered the mayor.

"Pray be seated. You are tired, I see, for your wounded leg hinders—"

"My leg!" cried the mayor, casting upon Ivan Ivanovich a glance such as a giant casts on a pygmy or a learned pedant on a dancing-master. With this he stretched out his foot and stamped on the floor with it. This display of valour, however, cost him dear, for his whole person lurched forward and his nose pecked the railing; but the sage guardian of order, to preserve appearances, at once righted himself and felt in his pocket as though to get out his snuff-box.

"I can assure you, my dearest friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovich, that I made worse marches in my time. Yes,

seriously I did. For instance during the campaign of 1807— Ah. I'll tell you how I climbed over a fence to visit a pretty German." With this the mayor screwed up one eye and gave a fiendishly sly smile.

"Where have you been today?" asked Ivan Ivanovich. desirous of cutting the mayor short and bringing him as quickly as possible to the occasion of his visit. He would very much have liked to ask what it was the mayor intended to tell him; but a refined *savoir-faire* made him feel the impropriety of such a question, and Ivan Ivanovich was obliged to control himself and to wait for the solution of the mystery, though his heart was throbbing with unusual violence.

"By all means, I will tell you where I have been." answered the mayor; "in the first place I must tell you that it is beautiful weather today...."

The last words were almost too much for Ivan Ivanovich.

"But excuse me," the mayor went on, "I've come to you today about an important matter." Here the mayor's face and deportment resumed the anxious expression with which he had attacked the steps. Ivan Ivanovich revived, and trembled as though he were in a fever, though, as his habit was. he promptly asked:

"What is it? Important? Is it really important?"

"Well, you will see: first of all, I must hasten to inform you, dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovich, that you ... for my part kindly observe I say nothing, but the forms of government, the forms of government demand it you have committed a breach of public order!"

"What are you saying, Pyotr Fyodorovich? I don't understand a word of it."

"Upon my soul, Ivan Ivanovich! How can you say you don't understand a word of it? Your own beast has carried off a very

important legal document, and after that you say you don't understand a word of it!"

"What beast?"

"Saving your presence, your own grey sow."

"And how am I to blame? Why did the court-porter open the door?"

"But, Ivan Ivanovich, the beast is your property; so you are to blame."

"I am very much obliged to you for putting me on a level with a sow."

"Come, I did not say that, Ivan Ivanovich! Dear me, I did not say that! Kindly consider the question yourself with an open mind. You are undoubtedly aware that, in accordance with the forms of government, unclean animals are prohibited from walking about in the town, especially in the principal streets. You must admit that that's prohibited."

"God knows what you are talking about. As though it mattered a sow going out into the street!"

"Allow me to put to you, allow me, allow me, Ivan Ivanovich; it's utterly impossible. What can we do? It's the will of the government, we must obey. I do not dispute the fact that fowls and geese sometimes run into the street and even into the square—fowls and geese, mind; but even last year I issued a proclamation that pigs and goats were not to be allowed in public squares, and I ordered that proclamation to be read aloud before the assembled people."

"Well, Pyotr Fyodorovich, I see nothing in all this but that you are trying to insult me in every way possible."

"Oh, you can't say that, my dear friend and benefactor, you can't say that I am trying to insult you! Remember I didn't say a word to you last year when you put up a roof of fully a yard higher than the legal height. On the contrary, I pretended I

hadn't noticed it at all. Believe me, dearest friend, on this occasion, too, I would absolutely, so to speak . . . but my duty, my office, in fact, requires me to look after public cleanliness. Only consider when all at once there rushes into the principal street—"

"Your principal street, indeed! Why, every woman goes there to fling away what she does not want."

"Allow me to say, Ivan Ivanovich, that it's you who are insulting me! It is true it does happen at times, but mostly under a fence, or behind barns or sheds; but that a sow in farrow should run into the principal street, the square, is a thing that—"

"Good gracious, Pyotr Fyodorovich! Why, a sow is God's creation!"

"Agreed. All the world knows that you are a learned man, that you are versed in the sciences and all manner of subjects. Of course, I have never studied any sciences at all. I began to learn to write only when I was thirty. You see I rose from the ranks, as you are aware."

"Hm!" said Ivan Ivanovich.

"Yes," the mayor went on, "in 1801 I was in the 42nd infantry regiment an ensign in the 4th company. Our company commander was—if you will allow me—Captain Yeremeyev." At this the mayor put his finger into the snuff-box which Ivan Ivanovich held open and fiddled with the snuff.

Ivan Ivanovich answered, "Hm."

"But my duty," the mayor went on, "is to obey the orders of government. Are you aware, Ivan Ivanovich, that anyone who purloins a legal document in a court of law is liable like any other criminal to be tried in a criminal court?"

"I am so well aware of it that if you like I will teach you. That applies to human beings; for instance, if you were to steal a document; but a sow is an animal, God's creation."

"Quite, so, but the law says: one guilty of purloining . . . I beg you to note attentively, *one guilty*! Nothing is here defined as to species, sex or calling; therefore an animal, too, may be guilty. Say what you like, but until sentence is passed on it, the animal ought to be handed over to the police, as guilty of a breach of order."

"No, Pyotr Fyodorovich," retorted Ivan Ivanovich coolly, "that will not be so!"

"As you like, but I am bound to follow the regulations of government."

"Why are you threatening me? I suppose you mean to send the one-armed soldier for her? I'll bid my servant-girl show him out with the oven-fork; his remaining arm will be broken."

"I will not venture to argue with you. In that case, if you will not hand her over to the police, make what use you like of her; cut her up, if you like, for Christmas, and make her into ham or eat her as fresh pork. Only I should like to ask you, if you will be making sausages, to send me just a couple of those your Gapka makes so nicely of the blood and fat. My Agrafena Trofimovna is very fond of them."

"Certainly I'll send you a couple of sausages."

"I shall be very grateful to you, dear friend and benefactor. Now allow me to say just one more word. I am charged by the judge and, indeed, by all our acquaintances, so to speak, to reconcile you with your friend, Ivan Nikiforovich."

"What! That boor! Reconcile me with that ruffian! Never! That will never be! Never!" Ivan Ivanovich was in an extremely resolute mood.

"Have it your own way," answered the mayor, regaling both nostrils with snuff. "I will not venture to advise you; however, allow me to put it to you: here you are now on bad terms, while if you are reconciled—"

But Ivan Ivanovich began talking about catching quails which was his usual resource when he wanted to change the subject.

And so the mayor was obliged to go about his business without having achieved any success whatever.

Chapter VI

FROM WHICH THE READER MAY EASILY LEARN ALL THAT IS CONTAINED THEREIN

In spite of all the efforts of the court to conceal the affair, the very next day all Mirgorod knew that Ivan Ivanovich's sow had carried off Ivan Nikiforovich's petition. The mayor himself, in a moment of forgetfulness, first let slip a word. When Ivan Nikiforovich was told of it, he made no comment; he only asked, "Wasn't it the grey one?"

But Agafya Fedoseyevna, who was present at the time, began setting upon Ivan Nikiforovich again. "What are you thinking about, Ivan Nikiforovich? You'll be laughed at as a fool if you let it pass! A fine gentleman you'll be after this! You'll be lower than the peasant-woman who sells the doughnuts you are so fond of."

And the pertinacious woman talked him round! She picked up a swarthy middle-aged man with pimples all over his face, in a dark blue coat with patches on the elbows, a typical scribbling pettifogger! He smeared his top-boots with tar, wore three pens behind his ear and a glass bottle by way of an inkpot tied on a string to a button. He would eat nine pies at a sitting and put the tenth in his pocket, and would write so much of all manner of legal chicanery on a single sheet of stamped paper that nobody

could read it aloud straight off without intervals of coughing and sneezing. This little image of a man rummaged about, racked his brains and wrote, and at last concocted the following document:

"To the Mirgorod district court from the gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun.

"Concerning the aforesaid my petition the which was from me, the gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, relating to the gentleman Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, wherein which the district court of Mirgorod has manifested its partiality. And the same wanton insolence of the grey sow which was kept a secret and has reached our ears from persons in no way concerned therewith. Whereto the partiality and connivance, as of evil intention, falls within the jurisdiction of the law; inasmuch as the aforesaid sow is a foolish creature and thereby the more apt for the purloining of papers. Wherefrom it is evidently apparent that the sow frequently afore-mentioned could not otherwise than have been incited to the same by the opposing party, the self-styled gentleman Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, the same having been already detected in housebreaking, attempted murder and sacrilege. But the aforesaid Mirgorod court with its characteristic partiality manifested its tacit connivance; without the which connivance the aforesaid sow could by no manner of means have been admitted to the purloining of the paper, inasmuch as the Mirgorod district court is well provided with service; to which intent it is sufficient to name one soldier present on all occasions in the reception-room, who, though he has a cross-eye and a somewhat invalidated arm, is yet fully capable of driving out a sow and striking her with a stick. Wherefrom the connivance of the aforesaid Mirgorod court thereto is proven and the partition of the ill-gotten

profits therefrom on mutual terms is abundantly evident. The aforesaid robber and gentleman Ivan, son of Ivan Pererepenko, is manifestly the scoundrelly accomplice therein. Wherefore I, the gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, do herewith inform the said district court that if the petition above-mentioned shall not be recovered from the aforesaid grey sow or from the gentleman Pererepenko, her accomplice, and if proceedings shall not be taken upon it in accordance with justice and in my favour, then I, the gentleman Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, will lodge a complaint with the higher court concerning such illegal connivance of the aforesaid district court, transferring the case thereto with all due formalities.

"Ivan, son of Nikifor Dovgochkhun, gentleman of the Mirgorod district."

This petition had its effect. The judge, like good-natured people as a rule, was a man of cowardly disposition. He appealed to the secretary. But the secretary emitted a bass "hm" through his lips, while his countenance wore the expression of unconcern and diabolical ambiguity which appears only on the face of Satan when he sees the victim who has appealed to him lying at his feet. There was only one thing left: to reconcile the two friends. But how approach that when all attempts had hitherto been unsuccessful? However, they decided to try again; but Ivan Ivanovich declared point-blank that he would not hear of it, and was, indeed, very much incensed. Ivan Nikiforovich turned his back instead of answering, and did not utter a word. Then the case went forward with the extraordinary rapidity for which our courts of justice are so famous. A document was registered, inscribed, docketed, filed, signed, all in one and the same day; and then the case was laid on a shelf, where it lay and lay and lay for one year and a second and a third. Numbers of young girls had time to get married; a new street was laid down in Mirgorod;

thejudg e lost one molar tooth and two side ones; more small children were running about Ivan Ivanovich's yard than before (goodness only knows where they sprang from); to spite Ivan Ivanovich, Ivan Nikiforovich built a new goose-pen, though a little further away than the first, and so completely screened himself from Ivan Ivanovich that these worthy gentlemen scarcely ever saw each other's faces—and still the case lay in perfect order, in the cupboard which had been turned to marble by ink stains.

Meanwhile there occurred an event of the greatest importance in Mirgorod. The mayor was giving a ball! Where can I find brushes and colours to paint the variety of the assembly and the magnificence of the entertainment? Take a clock, open it, and look what is going on there! A terrible to-do, isn't it? Now imagine as many if not more wheels standing in the mayor's courtyard. What chaises and travelling carriages were not there! One had a wide back and a narrow front; another a narrow back but a wide front. One was a chaise and a covered trap both at once; another was neither chaise nor trap. One was like a huge haystack or a fat merchant's wife; another was like a dishevelled Jew or a skeleton that had not quite got rid of its skin. One was in profile exactly like a pipe with a long mouthpiece; another a strange creation, utterly shapeless and fantastic, was unlike anything in the world. From the midst of this chaos of wheels and box-seats rose the semblance of a carriage with a window like that of a room, with a thick cross-bar right across it. The coachmen in grey Cossack coats, tunics and grey jerkins, in sheepskin hats and caps of all patterns, with pipes in their hands, led the unharnessed horses about the courtyard. What a ball it was that the mayor gave! Allow me, I will count over all who were there: Taras Tarasovich, Yevpl Akinfovich, Yevtikhy Yevtikhiyevich, Ivan Ivanovich—not *the* Ivan Ivanovich, but the

other—Savva Gavrilovich, our Ivan Ivanovich, Yelevfery Yelevferiyevich, Makar Nazaryevich, Foma Grigoryevich.... I cannot go on! It is too much for me! My hand gets numb with writing! And how many ladies there were! Dark and fair, long and short, stout as Ivan Nikiforovich, and so thin that it seemed as though one could hide each one of them in the scabbard of the mayor's sword. What caps! What dresses! Red, yellow, coffee-coloured, green, blue, new, turned and remade; fichus, ribbons, reticules! Good-bye to my poor eyes! They will be of no more use after that spectacle. And what a long table was drawn out! And how everybody talked; what an uproar there was! A mill with all its clappers, grindstones and wheels going is nothing to it! I cannot tell you for certain what they talked about, but I suppose that they discussed many interesting and important topics, such as the weather, dogs, ladies' caps, corn, horses. At last Ivan Ivanovich—not *the* Ivan Ivanovich but the other one who squinted—said, "I am very much surprised that my right eye" (the squinting Ivan Ivanovich always spoke ironically of himself) "does not see Ivan Nikiforovich."

"He would not come!" said the mayor.

"How is that?"

"Well, it's two years since they had a quarrel, that is Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich, and wherever one goes the other won't come on any account!"

"You don't say!" At this the squinting Ivan Ivanovich turned his eyes upwards and clasped his hands together.

"Well now, if men with good eyes don't live in peace, how am I to see eye to eye with anyone!"

At these words everyone laughed heartily. We were very fond of the squinting Ivan Ivanovich, because he used to make jokes that were precisely in the taste of the day. Even a tall lean man in a wadded overcoat with a plaster on his nose who had hitherto

been sitting in the corner without the slightest change in the expression of his face, even when a fly flew up his nose—even this gentleman rose from his seat and moved nearer to the crowd surrounding the squinting Ivan Ivanovich.

"Do you know what," the latter said when he saw a goodly company standing round him, "instead of gazing at my cross-eye, as you are now, let us reconcile our two friends! At this moment Ivan Ivanovich is conversing with the ladies—let us send on the sly for Ivan Nikiforovich and bring them together."

All unanimously fell in with Ivan Ivanovich's suggestion and decided to send at once to Ivan Nikiforovich's house to beg him most particularly to come to dine with the mayor. But everyone was puzzled as to who should be entrusted with this weighty commission. They discussed at length who was most capable and most skilful in the diplomatic line; at last, it was unanimously resolved to confide the task to Anton Prokofyevich Golopuz.

But we must first make the reader a little acquainted with this remarkable person. Anton Prokofyevich was a perfectly virtuous man in the full meaning of the word; if any of the worthy citizens of Mirgorod gave him a neckerchief or a pair of breeches, he thanked them; if any gave him a slight flip on the nose, he thanked them even then. If he were asked, "Why is it your frock-coat is brown, Anton Prokofyevich, but the sleeves are blue?" he invariably answered, "And you haven't one like this at all! Wait a bit, it will soon be shabby and then it will be all alike!" And in fact the blue cloth began, from the effect of the sun, to turn brown, and now it goes perfectly well with the colour of the coat. But what is strange is that Anton Prokofyevich has the habit of wearing cloth clothes in the summer and cotton in the winter. He has no house of his own. He used to have one at the end of the town, but he sold it and with the money he got for it he bought three bay horses and a small chaise,

in which he used to ride about visiting the neighbouring landowners. But as the horses gave him a great deal of trouble, and besides he needed money to buy them oats, Anton Prokofyevich swopped them for a fiddle and a serf-girl, receiving a twenty-five-ruble note into the bargain. Then Anton Prokofyevich sold the fiddle and swopped the girl for a morocco purse set with gold, and now he has a purse the like of which no one else possesses. He pays for this gratification by not being able to drive about the countryside, and is forced to stay in town and to spend his nights at different houses, especially those of the gentlemen who derive pleasure from flipping him on the nose. Anton Prokofyevich is fond of good fare and plays pretty well at "Fools" and "Millers." Obedience has always been his natural element, and so, taking his cap and his stick, he set off immediately.

But as he went, he began thinking how he was to move Ivan Nikiforovich to come to the reception. The somewhat harsh character of that otherwise estimable individual made his task almost an impossible one. And, indeed, how could he be induced to come when even to get out of bed was a very great effort for him? And even supposing that he did get up, was he likely to go where—as he undoubtedly knew—his irreconcilable enemy was to be found? The more Anton Prokofyevich considered the subject, the more difficulties he found. The day was sultry; the sun was scorching; the perspiration poured down him in streams. Anton Prokofyevich, though he was flipped on the nose, was rather a wily man in many ways. It was only in barter that he was rather unlucky. He knew very well when he had to pretend to be a fool, and sometimes knew how to hold his own in circumstances and cases in which a clever man cannot often steer his course.

While his resourceful mind was thinking out means for persuading Ivan Nikiforovich, and he was going valiantly to face

the worst, an unexpected circumstance somewhat disconcerted him. It will not be amiss at this juncture to inform the reader that Anton Prokofyevich had, among other things, a pair of trousers with the strange peculiarity of attracting all the dogs to bite his calves whenever he put them on. As ill-luck would have it, he had put on those trousers that day, and so he had hardly abandoned himself to meditation when a terrible barking in all directions smote on his hearing. Anton Prokofyevich set up such a shout (no one could shout louder than he) that not only our friend the serving-woman and the inmate of the immense frock-coat ran out to meet him, but even the urchins from Ivan Ivanovich's courtyard raced to him, and though the dogs only succeeded in biting his leg, this greatly cooled his ardour, and he went up the steps with a certain timidity.

Chapter VII

AND LAST

"Ah, good day! What have you been teasing my dogs for?" said Ivan Nikiforovich, on seeing Anton Prokofyevich, for no one ever addressed the latter except jocosely.

"Plague take them all! Who's teasing them?" answered Anton Prokofyevich.

"That's a lie."

"Upon my soul, it isn't! Pyotr Fyodorovich asks you to dinner."

"Hm!"

"Upon my soul! I can't tell you how earnestly he begs you to come. 'What's the meaning of it,' he said, 'Ivan Nikiforovich avoids me as though I were an enemy; he will never come for a little chat or to sit a bit.'"

Ivan Nikiforovich stroked his chin.

"'If Ivan Nikiforovich will not come now,' he said, 'I don't know what to think: he must have something in his mind against me! Do me a favour, Anton Prokofyevich, persuade Ivan Nikiforovich!' Come, Ivan Nikiforovich, let us go! There is a delightful company there now!"

Ivan Nikiforovich began scrutinizing a cock, who was standing on the steps crowing his loudest.

"If only you knew, Ivan Nikiforovich," the zealous delegate continued, "what sturgeon, what fresh caviare has been sent to Pyotr Fyodorovich!"

At this Ivan Nikiforovich turned his head and began listening attentively.

This encouraged the delegate.

"Let us make haste and go; Foma Grigoryevich is there too! What's the matter with you?" he added, seeing that Ivan Nikiforovich was still lying in the same position. "Are we going or not?"

"I don't want to."

That "I don't want to" was a shock to Anton Prokofyevich; he had already imagined that his urgent representations had completely prevailed on this really worthy man; but he heard instead a resolute "I don't want to."

"Why don't you want to?" he asked almost with annoyance, a feeling he very rarely displayed, even when he had burning paper put on his head, which was a trick the judge and the mayor were particularly fond of.

Ivan Nikiforovich took a pinch of snuff.

"It's your business, Ivan Nikiforovich, but I don't know what prevents you."

"Why should I go?" Ivan Nikiforovich brought out at last. "The ruffian will be there!" That was what he usually called Ivan Ivanovich now.... Merciful heavens! And not long ago—

"Upon my soul, he won't! By all that's holy he won't! May I be struck dead on the spot with a thunderbolt!" answered Anton Prokofyevich, who was ready to take his oath a dozen times in an hour. "Let us go, Ivan Nikiforovich!"

"But you are lying, Anton Prokofyevich, I know he is there."

"Indeed and he's not! May I never leave the spot if he is! And think yourself what reason have I to tell a lie! May my arms and legs be withered!... What, don't you believe me even now? May I drop here dead at your feet! May neither Father nor Mother nor myself ever see the kingdom of heaven! Do you still disbelieve me?"

Ivan Nikiforovich was completely appeased by these assurances, and bade his valet in the enormous frock-coat to bring him his trousers and his nankeen Cossack coat.

I think it is quite superfluous to describe how Ivan Nikiforovich put on his trousers, how his cravat was tied, and how, finally, he put on his Cossack coat which had split under the left sleeve. It is enough to say that during that time he maintained a decorous composure and did not answer one word to Anton Prokofyevich's proposition that he should swop something with him for his Turkish purse.

Meanwhile the assembled company were, with impatience, awaiting the decisive moment when Ivan Nikiforovich would make his appearance, and the universal desire that these worthy men should be reconciled might at last be gratified. Many were almost positive that Ivan Nikiforovich would not come. The mayor even offered to take a wager with the squinting Ivan Ivanovich that he would not come, and only gave it up because the latter insisted that the mayor should stake his wounded leg and he his cross-eye—at which the mayor was mightily offended while the company laughed on the sly. No one had yet sat down to table, though it was long past one o'clock—an hour

at which people have got some way with their dinner at Mirgorod, even on grand occasions.

Anton Prokofyevich had hardly appeared at the door when he was instantly surrounded by all. In answer to all questions he shouted one decisive phrase, "Won't come!" He had scarcely uttered this, and a shower of reproaches and abuse and possibly flips, too, was about to descend on his head for the failure of his mission, when the door opened suddenly and—Ivan Nikiforovich walked in.

If Satan himself or a corpse had suddenly appeared they would not have produced such amazement as that into which Ivan Nikiforovich's entrance plunged the whole company; while Anton Prokofyevich went off into guffaws of laughter, holding his sides with glee that he had so taken them in.

Anyway, it was almost incredible to everyone that Ivan Nikiforovich could, in so short a time, have dressed as befits a gentleman. Ivan Ivanovich was not present at that moment; he had left the room. Recovering from their stupefaction, all the company showed their interest in Ivan Nikiforovich's health and expressed their pleasure that he had grown stouter. Ivan Nikiforovich kissed everyone and said, "Much obliged."

Meanwhile the smell of borshch floated through the room and agreeably tickled the nostrils of the fasting guests. All streamed into the dining-room. A string of ladies, talkative and silent, lean and stout, filed in ahead, and the long table was dotted with every hue. I am not going to describe all the dishes on the table! I shall say nothing of the cheese cakes and sour cream, nor of the sweet-bread served with the borshch, nor of the turkey stuffed with plums and raisins, nor of the dish that looked very much like a boot soaked in kvass, nor of the sauce which is the swan song of the old cook, the sauce which is served in flaming spirit to the great diversion and, at the same time, terror of

the ladies. I am not going to talk about these dishes because I greatly prefer eating them to expatiating on them in conversation.

Ivan Ivanovich was very much pleased with the fish served with horse-radish sauce. He was entirely engrossed in the useful and nutritious exercise of eating it. Picking out the smallest fish-bones, he laid them on the plate, and somehow chanced to glance across the table. Heavenly Creator! How strange it was! Opposite him was sitting Ivan Nikiforovich!

At the very same instant Ivan Nikiforovich looked up, too!... No!... I cannot! Give me another pen! My pen is feeble, dead; it has too thin a nib for this picture! Their faces were as though turned to stone with amazement reflected on them. Each saw the long-familiar face, at the sight of which, one might suppose, each would advance as to an unexpected friend, offering his snuff-box with his usual, "Help yourself," or, "I venture to ask you to help yourself"; and yet that very face was terrible as some evil portent! Drops of sweat rolled down the faces of Ivan Ivanovich and of Ivan Nikiforovich.

All who were sitting at the table were mute with attention and could not take their eyes off the friends of days gone by. The ladies, who had till then been absorbed in a rather interesting conversation on the method of preparing capons, suddenly ceased talking. There was a sudden hush! It was a picture worthy of the brush of a great artist.

At last Ivan Ivanovich took out his handkerchief and began to blow his nose, while Ivan Nikiforovich looked round and rested his eyes on the open door.

The mayor at once noticed this and bade the servant shut the door securely. Then each of the friends fell to eating, and they did not once glance at each other again.

As soon as dinner was over, the two old friends rose from their seats and began looking for their caps to slip away. Then the

mayor gave a wink, and Ivan Ivanovich—not *the* Ivan Ivanovich but the other, the one who squinted—stood behind Ivan Nikiforovich's back while the mayor went up behind Ivan Ivanovich's back, and both began shoving them from behind so as to push them towards each other and not to let them go till they had shaken hands. Ivan Ivanovich, the one who squinted, though he shoved Ivan Nikiforovich a little askew, yet pushed him fairly successfully to the place where Ivan Ivanovich was standing; but the mayor took a line too much to one side, because again he could not cope with his unruly member which, on this occasion, would heed no command, and, as though to spite him, lurched a long way off in quite the opposite direction (this may possibly have been due to the number of liqueurs on the table), so that Ivan Ivanovich fell against a lady in a red dress who had been compelled by curiosity to thrust herself into their midst. Such an incident boded nothing good. However, to mend matters, the judge took the mayor's place and, sniffing up all the snuff from his upper lip, shoved Ivan Ivanovich in the other direction. This is the usual means of bringing about a reconciliation in Mirgorod; it is not unlike a game of ball. As soon as the judge gave Ivan Ivanovich a shove, the Ivan Ivanovich who squinted, pushed with all his strength and shoved Ivan Nikiforovich, from whom the sweat was dropping like rain-water from a roof. Although both friends resisted stoutly, they were yet thrust together, because both sides received considerable support from the other guests.

Then they were closely surrounded on all sides and not allowed to go until they consented to shake hands.

"God bless you, Ivan Nikiforovich and Ivan Ivanovich! Tell us truthfully now: what did you quarrel about? Wasn't it something trifling? Aren't you ashamed before men and before God!"

"I don't know," said Ivan Nikiforovich, panting with exhaustion (it was noticeable that he was by no means averse to reconciliation). "I don't know what I have done to Ivan Ivanovich; why did he cut down my goose-pen and plot my ruin?"

"I am not guilty of any such evil design," said Ivan Ivanovich, not looking at Ivan Nikiforovich. "I swear before God and before you, honourable gentlemen, I have done nothing to my enemy. Why does he defame me and cast ignominy on my rank and name?"

"How have I cast ignominy on you, Ivan Ivanovich?" said Ivan Nikiforovich. Another moment of explanation—another moment of reconciliation—and the long-standing feud was on the point of dying out. Already Ivan Nikiforovich was feeling in his pocket to get out his snuff-horn and say, "Help yourself."

"Was it not damage," answered Ivan Ivanovich without raising his eyes, "when you, sir, insulted my rank and name with a word which it would be unseemly to repeat here?"

"Let me tell you as a friend, Ivan Ivanovich!" (At this Ivan Nikiforovich put his finger on Ivan Ivanovich's button, which was a sign of his complete goodwill.) "You took offence over the devil knows what, over my calling you a 'gander'..."

Ivan Nikiforovich was instantly aware that he had committed an indiscretion in uttering that word; but it was too late: the word had been uttered. All was ruined!

Since Ivan Ivanovich had been beside himself and had flown into a rage, such as God grant one may never see, at the utterance of that word in private—think, dear readers, what it was now when this murderous word had been uttered in a company among whom there were a number of ladies, in whose society Ivan Ivanovich liked to be particularly punctilious. Had Ivan Nikiforovich acted otherwise, had he said "bird," and not "gander," the position might still have been saved. But—all was over!

He cast on Ivan Nikiforovich a glance—and what a glance! If that glance had been endowed with the power of action it would have reduced Ivan Nikiforovich to ashes. The guests understood that glance, and of their own accord made haste to separate them. And that man, a paragon of gentleness, who never let one beggar-woman pass without questioning her, rushed out in a terrible fury. How violent are the tempests aroused by the passions!

For a whole month nothing was heard of Ivan Ivanovich. He shut himself up in his house. The sacred chest was opened, from the chest were taken—what? Silver rubles! Old ancestral silver rubles! And these silver rubles passed into the inky hands of scribblers. The case was transferred to the higher court. And when Ivan Ivanovich received the joyous tidings that it would be decided on the morrow, only then did he look out at the world and make up his mind to go out. Alas! for the next ten years the higher court informed him daily that the case would be settled on the morrow!

Five years ago I was passing through the town of Mirgorod. It was a bad time for travelling. Autumn had set in with its gloomy, damp weather, mud and fog. A sort of unnatural greenness—the work of the tedious, incessant rains—lay in a thin network over the meadows and cornfields, on which it seemed no more becoming than mischievous tricks in an old man or roses on an old woman. In those days weather had a great effect upon me: I was depressed when it was dreary. But in spite of that I felt my heart beating eagerly as I drove into Mirgorod. Goodness, how many memories! It was twelve years since I had seen Mirgorod. Here, in those days, lived in touching friendship two unique men, two unique friends. And how many distin-

guished persons had died! The judge, Demyan Demyanovich, was dead by then; Ivan Ivanovich, the one who squinted, had taken leave of life, too. I drove into the principal street; posts were standing everywhere with wisps of straw tied to their tops: they were altering the streets! Several huts had been removed. Remnants of hurdles and fences stood here and there disconsolately.

It was a holiday. I ordered my sack-covered chaise to stop before the church, and went in so quietly that no one turned round. True there was no one to do so: the church was deserted; there were scarcely any people about; evidently even the most devout were afraid of the mud. In the dull, or rather, sickly weather the candles were somehow strangely unpleasant; the dark side-chapels were gloomy; the long windows with their round panes were streaming with tears of rain. I walked out into the side-chapel and addressed a venerable old man with grizzled hair. "Allow me to ask, is Ivan Nikiforovich still living?" At that moment the lamp before the icon flared up and the light fell directly on the old man's face. I was surprised when on looking closely at it I saw familiar features! It was Ivan Nikiforovich himself! But how he had changed!

"Are you quite well, Ivan Nikiforovich? You look much older!"

"Yes, I'm grown older. I've come today from Poltava," answered Ivan Nikiforovich.

"Good gracious! You've been to Poltava in such dreadful weather?"

"I was forced to! My lawsuit...."

At this I could not help dropping a sigh.

Ivan Nikiforovich noticed that sigh and said, "Don't worry: I have positive information that the case will be settled next week and in my favour."

I shrugged my shoulders and went to find out something about Ivan Ivanovich.

"Ivan Ivanovich is here!" someone told me. "He is in the choir."

Then I caught sight of a thin, wasted figure. Was that Ivan Ivanovich! The face was covered with wrinkles, the hair was completely white. But the *bekesha* was still the same. After the first greetings, Ivan Ivanovich, addressing me with the good-humoured smile which so well suited his funnel-shaped face, said, "Shall I tell you my agreeable news?"

"What news?" I asked.

"Tomorrow my case will positively be settled; the court has told me so for certain."

I sighed still more heavily, and made haste to say good-bye—because I was travelling on a very important business—and got into my chaise.

The lean horses, known in Mirgorod by the name of the post-express horses, set off, making an unpleasant sound as their hoofs sank into the grey mass of mud. The rain poured in streams on to the Jew who sat on the box covered with a sack. The damp pierced me through and through. The gloomy gate with the sentry-box, in which a veteran was cleaning his grey accoutrements, slowly passed by. Again the same fields, in places black and furrowed and in places covered with green, the drenched crows and jackdaws, the monotonous rain, the tearful sky without one gleam of light in it.—It is a dreary world, dear sirs!